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DEFEAT OF LTTE
A LESSON IN COIN OPERATIONS
(Long Paper)

By

Tarun Hindwan, Wg Cdr, Indian Air Force

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Advisor: Dr William Dean

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

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Abstract

The US, today is engaged in fighting insurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq. The slow progress of these campaigns has renewed interest in exploring new perspectives in conducting the modern COIN operations and finding the vulnerabilities of a insurgent network. This paper is a case study of the factors contributing to the defeat of LTTE and success of Sri Lankan COIN campaign to derive applicable lessons for current and future conflicts.

The sudden defeat of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam by the Sri Lankan armed forces took the world by surprise. Tamil Tigers, who were never expected to capitulate easily, went from the days of being counted as the deadliest of insurgent organization in the world to being virtually obliterated from existence within a matter of few months. A number of lessons can be derived from their defeat which can help in defining a new perspective for the US and rest of the world. This thesis will be written in two parts. The first part concentrates entirely on the Sri Lankan effort and deficiencies in LTTE strategy. The second part outlines the lessons learnt and compares them to the strategies advocated by Galula. Lastly this thesis analyzes the Indian Joint Forces doctrine on Sub-Conventional Operations and highlights the Indian focus in its age old campaign against insurgency in various parts of the country.

DEFEAT OF LTTE

A LESSON IN COIN OPERATIONS

Introduction

The Sri Lankan civil war or Tamil insurgency lasted for 26 years and caused wide spread mayhem, death and destruction in the island nation. The Sri Lankan victory against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009, the once mighty and almost invincible insurgent organization, has not garnered the deserved attention in the world military circles. The Sri Lankan approach oscillated between the Kinetic and Non-kinetic means to tackle the LTTE. In the end it was overtly a kinetic approach which visibly won the war for Sri Lankan armed forces. However, fortunately for the Sri Lankan government presence of other external factors like the loss of credibility of LTTE within Tamil population, split in their ranks and loss of the crucial external support equally helped in bringing about this twist in the script.

LTTE exceptionally executed the classic insurgent strategy as defined by Galula in his book on “Counterinsurgency Warfare” till 2002 and was recognized as the most ruthless and efficient insurgent organization in the world. Their doom was brought about by their departure from proven insurgency strategy; overconfidence in their own ability; failure to read the resolve of Sri Lankan government; and other external factors outside their control. The defeat of LTTE presents a perfect example of analyzing the efficacy of employing the Kinetic means against an insurgent force. This analysis of the campaign will include the historical background of the reasons for rise of the Tamil insurgency; the classic Galulian characteristics displayed by the Tigers till 2002; the evolution of Sri Lankan effort partly influenced by declining external

influence and support to Tigers; the causes which contributed to the demise of Tigers; and finally the lessons learnt from this successful COIN operation.

The findings and lessons of the paper are significant to the present conduct of operations by the US and to other countries engaged in COIN operations. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have led to the realization of inadequacy of the knowledge in the field of counter insurgency. The US approach has oscillated between Kinetic and Non-kinetic means with a fierce debate on the supremacy of the two. There have been numerous books written on this subject, notably the prominent Rupert Smith's book "The Utility of Force" and Thomas X. Hammes's, "The Sling and the Stone." These books deal with the question of employing kinetic or non-kinetic means in achieving the aim. They present strong arguments in the favor of the non-kinetic approach in tackling insurgency. However the answer might lie in an amalgamation of both the approaches. The example of the few successful COIN operations conducted in history like the Boar Campaign by the Britishers and the Philippines COIN operations by the US armed forces show this precise amalgamation where the predominantly Kinetic approach was backed through Non-kinetic means. As Brian McAllistar Linn argues, "The US won the Philippines war because it was able to structure a coherent pacification policy that balanced conciliation with repression, winning over the Filipino population and punishing those who resisted."¹ In the contemporary period, the Sri Lankan success stands out and provides a perfect platform for analyzing both approaches. This analysis needs to be taken in the correct perspective, as the geographical, social, religious and geopolitical realities of Sri Lankan conflict might be vastly different than some of the other contemporary ongoing conflicts.

The analysis in this paper deals at strategic and operational level and does not dwell at tactical level. The first section explains the background of the insurgency and touches on the

ethnic, social, economic factors along with the discriminatory policies of the Sri Lankan government responsible for the alienation of the Tamil population. The second section mirrors the evolution of LTTE against the classic orthodox insurgency phases as defined by Galula.² It also touches on the oscillating and confused approach of Sri Lankan government between employing kinetic or non-kinetic means. The third section deals with the turnaround in the Sri Lankan effort partly because of its own political resolve and partly because of the strategic errors committed by LTTE and changed geo-political realities of the new world less tolerant to the idea of armed insurgencies and terrorism post 9/11. The last section lays down the causes for the LTTE defeat along with the lessons and recommendations for the direction of the future strategies against insurgencies.

A number of publications and books have helped in this analysis of the Sri Lankan conflict. The most significant has been Narayan Swamy's "The Tiger Vanquished", which gives a deep appreciation of the causes for the demise of LTTE. His interviews of former LTTE cadre and articles provide a firsthand account of the conflict on ground in the last days. His analysis provides the importance of external factors beyond the control of LTTE and also Sri Lankan government in the eventual defeat of Tigers. His seemingly Indian bias is balanced by the prominent works of Sinhalese and American authors notably Rohan Gunaratna's "Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka" and Robert I. Rotberg's "Creating Peace in Sri Lanka: Civil War and Reconciliation". These provide the ethnic, social, economic, political, administrative and external factors responsible for the rise and subsequent demise of LTTE.

There are some other notable publications on this subject. The most notable is the thesis of Maj Edward J Amato (2002), "Tail of the Dragon: The Sri Lankan effort to subdue the LTTE", which provides a comprehensive account of the oscillating and confused approach of the

Sri Lankan government in tackling the LTTE. His analysis also provides the deficiencies in the Sri Lankan government efforts in the shape of weak and fractured political resolve; inefficient, ill-equipped and demoralized Sri Lankan Army; and the strategic ingenuity of LTTE till 2002.

This thesis draws from the prominent works of two advocates of kinetic and non-kinetic approach; Galula's "Counterinsurgency Warfare" and Callwell's "Small Wars." The Tiger insurgency showed the traits of classic strategy of insurgency warfare as described by Galula till the beginning of twenty first century. The Sri Lankan response oscillated between the counterinsurgency strategy as advocated by Galula and the total kinetic approach advocated by Callwell. The Sri Lanka did not follow a coherent strategy and showed confused leadership. Their choice was at times governed by the domestic political pressure and other times by the external pressures. On one hand the political leadership did not show the resolve needed to tackle such a conflict and on the other hand, the factors beyond their control influenced their choice. In the end it was a seemingly Callwell approach of brutal and sustained kinetic campaign which won the day for them. The question one needs to ask is that, could this overtly kinetic approach have won without the underlying support from the non-kinetic means? The Sri Lankan conflict provides the limitations of both approaches when followed in isolation.

Background to Tamil Insurgency

Sri Lanka has always been an ethnically and religiously diverse nation. At the time of independence out of the 18 million people, the two major ethnic groups comprised 74 percent Sinhalese and 18 percent Tamils.³ The Sinhalese are mostly concentrated in the southern, western, and central parts of Sri Lanka. They derive their roots from India, but have been influenced by other cultures including Portuguese, English, Dutch and South East Asian.⁴ The majority of Tamil population is located in Northern and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka. They have

two clear distinctions, the Jaffna Tamils, who are mainly descendents of tribes that arrived on the island well over 1500 years ago and the Indian Tamils, who originated from plantation workers brought to the island by the British tea planters during the 19th and early 20th centuries.⁵

Sinhalese are Buddhist with a Christian minority and Tamilians are mainly Hindus with a Muslim minority. In the period after independence the urban Tamils were well placed in prominent positions, but the rural Tamils were largely poor relative to Sinhala population.⁶

The seeds of the Tamil insurgency were laid in the years succeeding the transition to independence in 1948. The large Tamil population presented a potential ethnic identity crisis for the Sinhala majority and stoked the fire to Sinhala nationalism. Majority Sinhalese saw the Tamils as migrants from the Indian Tamil state and a threat to their language and culture. The 1948 constitution, written with little Tamil input lacked an effective formal protection for minorities and deprived rural Tamils of citizenship and the right to vote.⁷ In 1956, riding on the wave of Sinhala nationalism, Sri Lankan Freedom Party led by S W R D Bandaranaike swept to power with the promise of establishing the primacy of Sinhala language and culture. The government followed systematic discrimination consequently leading to gradual reduction of Tamil participation in government jobs, education and armed forces.⁸ The Tamils resented the bias and resorted to demonstrations against the government in turn inviting the Sinhala violent retaliation. The final nails in the coffin for the discriminatory policies were laid in the constitution of 1972 which accorded Sinhala the official language and cultural status; and Buddhist religion the protection of state without any similar status to Tamil language or culture.

The victory of United National Party (UNP) under SR Jayawardane in 1977 saw further polarization of Sinhala votes against Tamilians and led to increased discrimination. This united the various Tamil parties under the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and produced the

demand for creation of autonomous Tamil state. The Tamils also sought support from the Indian Tamils through the bonds of common language, cultural and ethnic identity. The sporadic violence between Sinhala and Tamils led to growing tensions between the two ethnic groups. In an escalation of political unrest in the late seventies and throughout eighties, groups representing the Tamil minority moved toward organized insurgency. In 1978, the younger members of the party broke away and took up armed opposition against the government as LTTE under the charismatic leadership of Villupilai Prabhakaran. The Sri Lankan government responded to the unrest by deploying forces to the north and the east. In July, 1983 the ambush of 13 Sri Lankan soldiers by the LTTE resulted in major ethnic riots in Colombo. Thousands of Tamils were killed and scores of Tamil businesses and properties targeted.

The failure of the government to protect the innocent Tamils led to wide spread disillusionment and increase in popular support for the LTTE among the Tamils. As in the words of Rotberg, the LTTE expanded rapidly in this period first by drawing support of the marginalized Tamils in the north and then from the innumerable Tamils who fled to escape the Sinhala perpetrated violence.⁹ This also led to increased inflow of refugees across the border in to India. The Indian politicians saw domestic political advantage of gaining Indian Tamil vote-bank by supporting the Sri Lankan Tamil opposition in protecting Tamil interest.¹⁰ Tamil bases were built up in jungle areas of the northern and eastern parts of the island and increasingly in the southern districts of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where Tamil groups received official and unofficial support.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was the biggest beneficiary of these, along with other competing groups, which were sometimes hostile to each other. Emboldened by the support it received from the Tamil population, LTTE waged a systematic insurgency throughout

eighties against the Sinhala government officials and Tamil moderates. It established control of the northern areas of island including the city of Jaffna. The Sri Lankan Army replied with a major military offensive in 1987 to wrest control of Jaffna peninsula. Under pressure from the pro LTTE state government of Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the Indian Central (Federal) government put intense diplomatic pressure on the Sri Lankan government to halt the offensive. The Jayawardene government, facing a simultaneous resurgence of Sinhalese militancy of the JVP, became receptive to initiatives by the Indian government.

After prolonged negotiations, an accord was signed between India and Sri Lanka on July 29, 1987, that offered the Tamils an autonomous integrated northeast province within a united Sri Lanka and provided for the introduction of an Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) to enforce the terms. The Sri Lankan government, the LTTE, and the IPKF, however, disagreed over the implementation of the accord. LTTE though had cooperated initially by surrendering significant quantities of arms and ammunition felt betrayed by the lack of progress on the devolution of autonomy and resumed its offensive, this time against the IPKF, which was trying to disarm it. The Sri Lankan government on its part showed short sightedness and became suspicious of Indian presence and feared that Indians planned to maintain an indefinite strategic presence in the island. Indians were in part responsible for it by creating a militia group Tamil National Army (TNA) to fight the proxy war on its behalf against the LTTE, without taking the Sri Lankan government in confidence. The Sri Lankan government negotiated a cease-fire with the LTTE and even armed the group to fight the IPKF.¹¹ The IPKF would have likely finished off the LTTE if allowed to stay back in the island.¹² In January 1989 Jayawardene retired and was succeeded by Premadasa, who had defeated Bandaranaike in the December 1988 elections.

Premadasa negotiated a withdrawal of the IPKF, which was completed in March 1990, and the battle against Tamil insurgency was again taken up by the Sri Lankan army.

The IPKF operation instilled a sense of betrayal in the LTTE leadership towards the Indian government. LTTE orchestrated the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who had negotiated the peace accord with the Sri Lankan government. This led to official banning of LTTE in India and increased difficulty for LTTE in harnessing the unofficial material and financial Tamil support from the Indian mainland.

The withdrawal of IPKF was hailed as a grand victory by the LTTE who moved in quickly in the vacuum created by their departure and occupied the North and North Eastern regions of the island.¹³ The Sri Lankan government renewed special powers to the armed forces with extensive powers for arrests and detention. In a way, Sri Lanka followed a scorched earth policy, with thousands of people killed or disappeared on mere suspicion of supporting LTTE. Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne pointed out, “You cannot do things under normal law. It takes a lot of time. By the time my good friends who are lawyers take time to solve things, the match will be over.”¹⁴ The army advance was ferociously opposed by the LTTE. The high handedness of the Sri Lankan Army contributed directly to the appeal of LTTE and considerably swelled its rank and files. There appeared to be a stale mate between both sides with Tigers controlling most of the northern and eastern areas.

In 1994, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) came to power in a coalition headed by Chandrika Kumaratunga. Kumaratunga preferred a non-kinetic approach and declared cease-fire and conducted extensive talks with LTTE. The LTTE was playing to the zero sum policy, all or nothing approach. They placed a list of demands in front of the government and withdrew from

talks when demands could not be met. From 1996 to 2000, LTTE steadily captured one after another Sri Lankan bases in the North and East.

The loss of Indian official support did not hamper the material and financial support from the south India. LTTE also developed strong international networks for managing its supply chain through smuggling and narcotics network. The influence of LTTE had increased tremendously in the international Tamil diaspora. Though most of local Tamils were sympathizers to the LTTE cause, they were not able to provide any overt financial support. The financial support came from the international diaspora of displaced Tamils living overseas in South East Asia, Europe, US and India. Despite international surveillance LTTE continued to smuggle arms and other material at will. Various arms consignments were seized across the globe were an example of the well entrenched smuggling network of LTTE. In 1989 Egyptian authorities captured a Colombo bound vessel with machine guns, TNT, rounds of 7.63 rifles and cartridges.¹⁵

The period from 2002 to 2006 was the longest period of relative calm for the region. In 2002, a Norway brokered Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) was negotiated between LTTE and Sri Lankan government. LTTE had earlier used the cease-fire duration to its own advantages by restocking, resupplying equipment; and training, and recruiting new cadre. The longer period of non hostilities brought about a power struggle in LTTE which resulted in breaking away of eastern faction of LTTE under the leadership of regional commander Karuna. By one estimate the eastern factions took away an approximate 4000 fighters from the total force of 12-13000 LTTE fighters.¹⁶ LTTE realistically could never recover from this loss. To compound this mistake, LTTE made the strategic error of breaking the cease fire when it was most vulnerable,

due to decreased cadre strength and choking of its conventional supply routes due to international pressure.

The Sri Lankan Armed forces better trained, equipped and under a resolute political leadership launched its campaign against the LTTE in 2006. LTTE severely depleted in strength but still having false hopes in its capabilities chose to fight a conventional battle and were no match for the combined air- ground- sea fire power of the government forces. The Tigers were forced to forcibly recruit people in their force; even the children and women were not spared. This started the alienation of the people fed up with decades of fighting and getting used to some years of peace. The Tamil Tigers were exposing their vulnerability and diluting their center of gravity by losing the support of the people. The Tigers hoped for an intervention by India or other foreign governments, severely misreading the world mood regarding terrorism and armed insurgencies. In the May of 2009, the last Tiger bastion was conquered with the fall of their leader Prabhakaran.

The Characteristics of Tamil insurgency

As Galula points out in his book “Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice”, there are five distinct phases of insurgency. The first phase starts with the formation of a party to project an identity with a cause which the aimed population can relate with. The next phase develops with the union of all opposition groups under one umbrella. The third phase is the introduction of Guerilla tactics with the aim of building the insurgents power and support among the masses. This is followed by the direct confrontation of enemy troops in their own land thus

carving out occupied areas under the control of insurgents. The last phase is the complete annihilation of enemy troops and official machinery from the targeted areas.¹⁷

The Tamil insurgent strategy showed distinct understanding of the various phases required in successful conduct of an insurgency. The first two phases of the insurgency were laid prior to eighties with the creation of first the TULF and then LTTE. The underlying feeling of discrimination and oppression was exploited to generate support and sympathy for the insurgents cause. The next came a systematic weeding out and targeting of opponents; and merger or annihilation of the rival militant groups. The overlapping phase to this was the transition to the guerilla warfare leading to controlled areas in the North. This further led to transition to a conventional army setup with a provisional government structure.

In the words of Galula, “the best cause must be such that the counterinsurgent cannot espouse it too or can do so only at the risk of losing power.”¹⁸ In Sri Lanka the stage was set for insurgency in eighties with the government itself providing the social, economic, racial, ethnic and religious cause for it. Since repetitive governments came to power riding on the wave of Sinhala nationalism, it was very difficult for them to compromise and meet the demands of the Tamil insurgents. Therefore the cause of Tamil autonomy was such that, it could not be easily digested by the politically vulnerable Sri Lankan government.

Next came the consolidation phase, reacting to series of discriminatory moves that were designed for Sinhalese domination of the country’s main educational institutions and bureaucracy, several opposing Tamil groups banded together to form the Tamil United Front (TUF) or the later TULF.¹⁹ Initial struggle was for the right to equality; however continued refusal by the Sri Lankan government to acknowledge even minor concessions for Tamils led to hard line nationalist demand for creation of an autonomous Tamil state. With the creation of a

single party now the aspirations of the Tamil population rested on one single organization. This was a period of struggle through accepted political channels and mirrors the second stage of the Galula theory.

In these relatively peaceful years, there was sporadic violence between Sinhala people and numerous militant groups which has sprung up for the Tamil cause. The prominent among them was LTTE, which was a breakaway component of the political TULF. The transition to guerilla warfare requires the sympathy of the majority of the targeted population; without whose critical logistical support the militant operation will invariably fail. The trigger for this was provided in 1983, in response to the ambush in which thirteen Sinhalese soldiers died, there were extensive riots in Colombo and throughout much of the island against the Tamil population. The Tamil properties and business were selectively targeted and led to loss of lives of thousands of people. The lack of action on the part of government led to widespread disillusionment and further alienated the Tamil population and literally pushed them in the arms of LTTE.

The period from 1983 to 2000 saw gradual strengthening of LTTE. The Sri Lankan government approach in this duration was based on military solution. The government's scorched earth policy, did not work because the non kinetic factors were overlooked and partly due to the classic guerilla tactics of LTTE. The tigers never presented any conventional target to the Sri Lankan forces, preferring to disperse instead of engaging the superior might and numerical strength of government forces. They instead chose the classic insurgent strategy of choosing their place and time of engagement. There were numerous casualties in LTTE camp but they were easily able to recruit from the sympathetic population. The high handed tactics of the Sri Lankan army did not help to their cause either. The 1995 Operation Leap Frog accounted for nearly hundreds of civilian deaths and many more injured and rendered homeless.²⁰

Galula writes that “Guerilla warfare alone cannot win the war (insurgency) against a resolute enemy (government).”²¹ The enemy must be met on his ground; an insurgent regular army must be created in order to destroy the counter insurgent forces.²² In the nineties the LTTE evolved itself into a regular insurgent force with its own command and control network and artillery support. However they retained the flexibility of falling back to guerilla organization when faced with a superior strength enemy force. This was very visible in the Sri Lankan army success in Jaffna in 1996. The LTTE cadre preferred to melt away in jungles rather than engage the superior force. This was one instance where Sri Lanka could have annihilated LTTE had it continued its offensive. However the Sri Lankan leadership over optimistically believed that the LTTE will disperse with the base in Jaffna. They failed to realize that the jungles provide the sanctuary for the insurgents and it would be just a matter of time before they would rebound back. Within months the LTTE launched a counter attack and retook almost entire territory back from government forces.

The success of LTTE in this period was due to their recognizing their vulnerabilities and falling back to guerilla tactics when faced in difficult situations. The Sri Lankan forces did not clearly identify the Tamil population as the center of gravity or at least their actions (scorched earth policy) spoke otherwise.

Strategic Blunders of LTTE and Causes of Defeat

From the hopeless situation of nineties to the total victory over Tigers in 2009, the Sri Lankan effort underwent tremendous transformation. There were numerous factors which contributed to this successful COIN campaign. If the Sri Lankan campaign, which was resolute

and focused for a fight to the finish this time, was clearly responsible for the demise of LTTE, equal share goes to some gross strategic blunders of the LTTE leadership. There were also some key events which changed the course of the history. First was the assassination of the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 which turned LTTE in to an untouchable in Indian official circles and diluted the Indian sympathy for the Tamil cause. The three key developments during the months of March to May of 2004 were next in shaping the unfolding of events. First was the crucial split in LTTE with the breaking off of the Karuna faction which led to substantial weakening of the organization. This was followed by the defeat of UNP in Sri Lanka elections in April 2004. The last factor was the election of Congress government in India in May 2004. The Congress party was headed by the widow of assassinated Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and LTTE now could never realistically hope for any support from the Indian government.

First strategic blunder of LTTE was the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Following its policy of exterminating the leaders who were supposed betrayers of the Tamil cause; LTTE assassinated Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, while he was campaigning for a second term as Prime Minister. The LTTE was fearful of the return of Congress government which it blamed for the failed peace accord of 1987. Narayan Swamy writes, "It was the fear of Rajiv Gandhi's return to power and another possible confrontation with India that led Prabhakaran to take this ill fated decision."²³ Even the LTTE acknowledged this, as is clearly reflected by Narayan Swamy's interviews with former guerillas, "More and more tiger operatives and high profile supporters admitted, that Rajiv Gandhi's killing was a blunder by Prabhakaran."²⁴ Post this killing; LTTE could never regain popular support in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Second strategic blunder was the zero sum strategy followed by LTTE. It was an all or nothing approach that is either an independent Tamil land or nothing. The failure of the LTTE

in negotiating a political settlement when it was strongest contributed to their eventual defeat. The tigers failed to read the political aspirations of the population who was itching for a settlement. They were not ready for a settlement within the Sri Lankan federal state whereas international community, especially India was not ready for the division of Sri Lankan state. As Narayan Swamy writes, “New Delhi could never accept a dictatorship in the north and east of Sri Lanka.”²⁵ The tigers would have benefitted from the example of Arafat, who changed gears though belatedly, towards a political non-violent settlement in spite of initially being the head of a violent extremist organization. According to Hammes, the first Intifada in 1987 brought into forefront the desire of a non violent strategy, as against the militant strategy of Palestine Liberation Organization. Arafat though late to realize the mood of the population showed enough flexibility in changing strategy and settle for a political settlement.²⁶

The central figure in the Sri Lankan effort was the President Mahinda Rajapaksa, elected on an anti LTTE sentiment; ironically benefitting from the election boycott call given to Tamils by LTTE. The two candidates for the 2005 elections were the Wickremesinghe of United National Party and Mahinda Rajapaksa of United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA). Wickremesinghe, who had signed the 2002 CFA as the Prime Minister favored the non-kinetic approach and was more accommodating to the Tamil demands. Rajapaksa also a former Prime Minister had always been a vehement advocate of a more kinetic approach. The LTTE call for a boycott resulted in limited turnout of Tamil voters, literally handing away a narrow victory to Rajapaksa. The low turnout of the Tamil voters was mainly held responsible for his victory with narrowest margin against the moderate Wickremesinghe of UNP who was more attuned to a negotiated settlement with LTTE. The boycott of the elections in 2005 was definitely one of the

crucial strategic blunders by LTTE, leading to election of Mahinda Rajapaksa, who proved to be the nemesis of LTTE.

There were other events across the globe beyond the control of the LTTE and Sri Lankan government which had changed the world view towards armed insurgencies. Post 9/11, the US and allies declared war on terror; and were not accommodating to any kind of financial support for any armed insurgency being generated on their soil. The Tamil diaspora in the west had been the biggest financier for LTTE. Loss of their financial support was a big blow to overall LTTE organization. The increased surveillance and policing also restricted the networks and smuggling routes through which LTTE could source its arms and ammunition. Another major game changer was the election of the Congress government in India headed by the widow of Rajiv Gandhi. The immediate result of this was the Indian government's crackdown on the illegal material shipment across the Palk Strait in LTTE areas. The Indian government loathes to be seen as a provider to any insurgency movement in the view of its own troubles in various parts of the country. On the request of Sri Lanka, Indian forces increased their patrolling in the area and literally choked the supply routes for LTTE. On the inputs of Indian Intelligence Bureau, several caches of arms and materials were intercepted in Tamil Nadu and other Indian states heading for LTTE areas.

There were other organizational factors also responsible for the loss of fighting capability of the LTTE and loss of public support to the insurgency. The CFA in 2002 exposed the young cadre of LTTE to the pleasures of family life, with many marrying and raising a family. The natural progression of this was the lack in discipline and training of the LTTE fighters.²⁷ There were widespread desertions among the ranks as the CFA eroded the legitimacy of the main cause, "independence from Sri Lanka." The CFA also allowed the large section of Tamil diaspora to visit the LTTE heartland, exposing the LTTE cadre and population to a life style not

seen in the occupied areas. The further dilution of public support happened due to the exposure to the ordinary Tamils leading a primitive life in the LTTE zone to the lavish lifestyle of their commanders. Narayan Swami quotes one of the women guerillas, “The CFA destroyed the LTTE.”²⁸

The biggest setback to LTTE was the breakaway of the Karuna faction the commander of its eastern wing in Mar 2004. Vinayagamurthy Muralitharan alias Karuna was once the confidant of LTTE supremo Prabhakaran. He rose to become one of the regional commanders of LTTE. His split was a direct result of the power struggle raging inside LTTE. The Sri Lankan government not only benefited with the reduction in the total numbers of LTTE fighters, but also gained on internal knowledge of LTTE operations.

The loss of trained members of its eastern faction placed LTTE in a numerically inferior position with regards to Sri Lankan forces. LTTE responded to this challenge by forcible recruitment of youth and even children as young as pre teens. In the beginning of August 2004, the Tiger cadres swooped down on a temple festival in Batticaloa’s Vavunathivu area, which the LTTE controlled and grabbed up to 40 children at one go.²⁹ Similar forced recruitment was carried out throughout controlled areas. In Narayanan words, “It was as if the LTTE had declared war on the Tamil people.” This slowly ate away the support base for the LTTE, with people openly criticizing it for their troubles. Mao reflects in the book “On Guerilla Warfare” that guerilla organization will fail “if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy.”³⁰

Sri Lankan Turnaround

The Sri Lankan turnaround was orchestrated by a number of individuals, and the lessons learnt from the previous campaigns. The two key figures were the President Rajapaksa, and his

army chief Sarath Fonseka. The president gave army chief a clear and unambiguous directive; a complete annihilation of LTTE. The Sri Lankan government and army applied lessons learnt from the failures of the past operations to devise a winnable politico military strategy. They were helped in this effort by the lucky breakaway of the Karuna faction and generous help of Indian government.

The central figure in the Sri Lankan effort was the President Mahinda Rajapaksa, a hardliner with anti-LTTE stance. It was ironic that he won election partly because of the boycott call given by Tamil Tigers leading to negligible Tamil voter turnout. He recognized that the center of gravity of LTTE in 2005 was no longer the Tamil population but had shifted to its fighting force. The Tamil Tigers by the beginning of 2006 had alienated a large section of Tamil population in island due to their high handed approach in forcibly recruiting cadre. He also recognized that the international opinion of LTTE had plummeted due to forcible recruitment of child soldiers and other human rights abuses. The biggest factor in his favor was the fortunate split of LTTE, with Karuna providing the alternative to LTTE leadership. As Galula points out that the counter insurgent strategy should be based on cultivating the active minority supporting the government, which can influence the neutral majority.³¹ Karuna provided that option of an alternate active minority, which can help the government rally around the neutral majority.

Rajapaksa showed steely political resolve in the face of mounting international pressure to continue with the operation. He was fortunate to have his own brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa as his defense minister and second brother Basil handling the political front of the government.³² This united front was able to withstand the pressures of the international as well as domestic community.

Rajapaksa understood the importance of depriving sanctuary for the Tigers and blocking the lines of communication or supply routes for LTTE. He also understood importance of India as a regional power and knew the criticality of support of the Indian government in his fight. His frequent interaction with the Indian government at all levels kept the Indian anxieties at bay and in fact provided the required non-military support. The Indian efforts in choking the supply lines of LTTE through its southern states had a serious impact on fighting potential of its cadre. The active pursuit and arrests of many sleeper cells in Tamil Nadu which were part of a well entrenched logistics network for LTTE came as a boon for the Sri Lankan effort.

Rajapaksa was ably supported in his effort by the Army chief Sarath Fonseka. Fonseka realized the importance of better equipment and ammunition towards the morale of the troops. He realized the importance of continuous assault in breaking the morale of the LTTE fighters, but also in expending the precious limited ammunition supply of Tigers. Fonseka's approach of continuous relentless offense towards the retreating LTTE fighters can best be described by the writings of Jomini, who advised, "Once committed in action the commander must not hesitate, the initiative must not be left with the enemy. If beaten, the enemy must be pursued relentlessly."³³ Fonseka knew the reversals of 1995, where after having taken Jaffna, Sri Lankan forces did not pursue the Tigers in jungles and thus allowed them to regroup and launch a counter attack. He was determined for a fight till finish with a sole aim of finishing LTTE as a fighting force.

Lessons from the Sri Lankan Effort

The Sri Lankan victory against LTTE brought a number of lessons to the forefront. The insurgent force can be defeated by kinetic means provided the key principles of warfare are adhered, which are mainly: a steady objective of operation with supportive and steady political resolve; denial of sanctuary and closure of supply routes to the insurgent; an active minority which can break the insurgent unity and can be used as a rallying point for the friendly forces; and a relentless and numerically heavy offensive till the total obliteration of the insurgent force.

As per Callwell the first step in a COIN operation is the selection and maintenance of an aim or objective.³⁴ The political leadership must define a steady objective for its armed forces and then allow a freedom of action. Once defined the aim must be maintained steadily against all the opposition. The Sri Lankan government defined the simple aim of total destruction of LTTE and did not waver from its aim despite the severe international pressure to end the war. Sri Lankan army on its part was able to operate freely without any shackles from the various human rights groups.

The second principle of denial of sanctuary and closure of supply routes is generally difficult to obtain, except if the insurgent force itself commits strategic errors and isolates the population which provides support. The strategic errors of LTTE in alienating the Indian people and then its own Tamil population with its high handed approach provided the Sri Lankan government the required initiative in closing the supply routes for the LTTE. The coordination of Sri Lankan government with Indian authorities led to huge seizures of war materials in southern India destined for LTTE. The Indian intelligence bureau was responsible for this effort and

seizure of huge amount of detonators, ball bearings, chemicals and other concealed explosives.³⁵ Undeniably the Sri Lankan government under Rajapaksa was able to rally crucial Indian support in denying Tigers the critical sanctuary and supply network.

The huge impact of the split of Karuna faction on the war making potential of LTTE contributed to its demise. The biggest lesson for a counterinsurgent force is to develop and harness the active minority as described by Galula to its own advantage. This active minority can help in many ways; through being the alternative to the insurgent force and providing the rallying point for the neutral majority impatient due to long violent struggle and also as a medium to provide critical intelligence inputs on the operation and tactics of the insurgent. Karuna split led to both weakening of the LTTE and intelligence gain for the Sri Lankan forces.

Lastly Callwell points out, "Irregular warriors, when they find themselves struggling against a foe who is not content to rest on his laurels but presses vehemently on and gives them no rest, their hearts will fail them and they will collapse."³⁶ The last principle is of relentless and sustained offensive till the final obliteration of the insurgent force. The Sri Lankan forces had committed the mistake earlier, when after having retaken Jaffna in 1995, they failed to press the advantage home due to weak political resolve and diluted overall aim. In 2009, they learnt their lessons well and continued with the relentless pursuit in the Mullaitivu jungles to finally wipe out the entire LTTE leadership.

The Sri Lankan operation highlights the importance of learning the lesson from the history. All the applied strategies are known facts; the most relevant to this conflict is the counter insurgency strategy advocated by Galula.

Galula's Approach

There are numerous books written on counterinsurgency warfare like Col Hammes "Sling and the stone", General Rupert Smith's "Utility of Force", and Ian Backett's "Modern Insurgencies and Counter Insurgencies". The common theme within these texts can be traced back to David Galula's masterwork, "Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice". Galula in his book defines the laws of counterinsurgency warfare, deduces from them its principles, and then outlines the corresponding strategy and tactics.³⁷ His book contains the basic framework for any counterinsurgency strategist to build a counterinsurgency campaign.

Galula begins his book by differentiating between revolutionary war, plot and insurgency as three different ways to take power by force. He defines revolution as an explosive upheaval where masses move and then leader appear. He argues that it is an accident which can be explained afterwards but not predicted. Next he defines plot as a clandestine action at overthrowing of top leadership of a country. The plot is always a gamble and does not involve masses. Finally he defines insurgency as a protracted struggle conducted methodically in order to attain specific intermediate objectives finally leading to overthrow of the existing order. In an insurgency leaders appears and then the masses are made to move. Galula further defines insurgency as a political battle and argues that the objective is the population. He argues that "If the insurgent manages to dissociate the population from the counterinsurgent, to control it physically, to get its active support, he will win the war because, in the final analysis, the exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population."³⁸

Galula constructs counterinsurgency strategy by first exploring the reasons and strategies of successful insurgencies. He argues that four factors are critical for a successful insurgency.

The biggest factor in insurgency is the need for a great cause, which has wide appeal and cannot be easily co-opted by the government. This cause serves as the backbone on which the insurgents can create a powerful political operation. He goes on to substantiate his argument with the examples of demand for rural land reform in Philippines or independence in Malaya. In both these cases government effectively co-opted the insurgent cause leading to lack of a legitimate cause and eventual elimination of insurgency. Secondly he lays down that in case of strong counterinsurgent there needs to be a trigger factor, an internal or external crisis, which leads to decrease in the counterinsurgent's strength or resolve. The strength of the insurgency is inversely related to the strength of the government forces. Any crisis will weaken the government and relatively strengthen the insurgent. Thirdly, the physical geography of the region is important. As Galula states, "the ideal situation for the insurgent would be a large land-locked country shaped like a blunt-tipped star, with jungle covered mountains along the borders and scattered swamps and plains, in a temperate zone with a large and dispersed rural population and a primitive economy."³⁹ Lastly, outside support is important, especially in the middle and later stages of the insurgency.

Galula also lays down the doctrine for insurgency and analyzes its vulnerabilities. Galula points out that there are five distinct phases of orthodox insurgency. The first phase starts with the formation of a party to project an identity with a cause which the aimed population can relate with. The next phase develops with the union of all opposition groups under one umbrella. The third phase is the introduction of Guerilla tactics with the aim of building the insurgents power and support among the masses. This is followed by the direct confrontation of enemy troops in their own land thus carving out occupied areas under the control of insurgents. The last phase is the complete annihilation of enemy troops and official machinery from the targeted areas.⁴⁰ He

also outlines a shortcut method of insurgency involving blind terrorism. He argues that both approaches merge when guerilla warfare commences. He then lays down the vulnerabilities of insurgent force. He argues that insurgency is most vulnerable when it transforms itself to movement warfare with support of tangible assets which can be easily identified and targeted by the counterinsurgent.

Galula thereafter goes on to lay down four laws for counterinsurgency. The first law is that the support of population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent. He defines the crux of problem as keeping an area after it has been cleaned. He argues that this can only be achieved with the support of the population.⁴¹ In the second law he gives the guideline to achieve support of the population. In Galula's words, "In any situation, whatever the cause, there will be an active minority for the cause, a neutral majority, and an active minority against the cause."⁴² He argues that, "the technique of power consists in relying on the favorable minority in order to rally the neutral majority and to neutralize or eliminate the hostile minority."⁴³ In his third law he elaborates that the support of the population to the counterinsurgent is conditional. If the insurgent hold is established, the active minority against insurgency will become invisible. The key is in establishing security, in which the minority hostile to insurgent feels free to emerge in open. Therefore in Galula's words, "effective political action needs to be preceded by military and police action against insurgents."⁴⁴ In his fourth law he argues that counterinsurgency operations are long drawn out affairs and require vastness of means and intensity of efforts.

Galula identifies the vulnerabilities of insurgent after analyzing his strategy. Through these vulnerabilities he lays out the does and don't for counter insurgent. In the end Galula defines an eight step formula for conducting a successful counterinsurgency operation. His

solution involves kinetic effort by armed forces to clear the area, followed by politico-military effort to keep the occupied area.

An analysis of his ideas gives a deep understanding of the insurgencies and helps in devising counter insurgency strategies. The analysis of Galula can be summed up in importance of three “S”, Sanctuary, Supply and Support. These are the three factors troubling the COIN effort in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both Iraq and Afghanistan have been difficult counter insurgencies because of the inability of coalition forces to effectively eliminate sanctuary and supply for the insurgencies. The other big theme coming out of Galula’s book is the strategy of “clear and keep”, essence of which can be seen in today’s “clear and hold” strategy.

Galula’s road map of counter insurgency or counter revolutionary warfare mirrors the counterinsurgency efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The success of Iraq is due to the strategy of focusing on gaining the support of the population through the active minority by providing security. Galula argues that “an insurgency is a competition between insurgent and government for the support of the population.”⁴⁵ Galula further stresses on the importance of human intelligence as a means to identify enemy. He argues that continuous presence of troops on ground helps in establishing human intelligence networking and identification of insurgents. His detailed instructions for gaining support of the local population by first protecting and thus laying the seeds of human intelligence are building blocks of today’s counter insurgency efforts. As in the words of Nagl, “the key to success in counter insurgency is massing intelligence derived from local population to identify the enemy.”⁴⁶ Galula lays down human intelligence as the key factor and he identifies the importance of troops staying in the population to achieve this aim.

As per Galula the counterinsurgent requires vastness in means and abundance of time. Galula stresses on the importance of boots on ground and continuous presence among the population as a means for denying the three 'S' to insurgents. He argues that "it is the boots on ground which matter."⁴⁷ His analysis is proven in the success of the surge strategy in Iraq, where more boots on ground permitted more security for locals.

Galula further argues that conventional armies are not suitable for COIN, a fact acknowledged by everybody today. The conventional superiority of US forces could not suppress the insurgency post Operation Iraqi Freedom. The requirement is for lightly armored troops indoctrinated in COIN warfare. Galula advises that these troops be supported by the team of experts on socio economic development like engineers, civil affairs and others. This is the precise framework being followed today in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Similarities in Sri Lankan and Galula approach.

The Sri Lankan strategy although differed visibly from Galula's eight step strategy however had the same core approach. The Sri Lankan winning strategy was a kinetic – non-kinetic – kinetic – non-kinetic approach. The first Kinetic and Non-kinetic phase was till 2007 just before the beginning of the last kinetic stage. The second kinetic phase which started with the last major offensive against LTTE simultaneously from north, west and south can also be equated to "surge" in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the first two kinetic and non-kinetic phases Sri Lankan government emphasized on the political nature of the conflict. The focus was on rebuilding and regaining the trust of the Tamil people. The CFA projected SLG as being serious towards the grievances of the Tamil

population. The defection of Karuna further strengthened this image. With Karuna inducted as a minister in SLG, a vast section of Tamils viewed SLG as a better bet than LTTE. This was the phase where the effort was more on developmental work and humanitarian aid in insurgency affected area rather than countering the armed power of LTTE. The final kinetic push happened when SLG sensed its opportunities due to a weakened LTTE. It was initially designed to get a further toehold in the insurgent stronghold. However unprecedented success of Sri Lankan offensive allowed it to virtually wipe out the entire LTTE organization. The SLG effort today has shifted to the last phase of addressing the root causes of Tamil grievances and towards developing a political structure for channelizing frustrations of common population.

Galula also emphasizes on the political nature of the contest. His formula is also based on kinetic means followed up with non kinetic means. He advises the need for security to get foot hold in addressed area and to be able to make contact with locals. He notes that "the goal is met when static units left to garrison the area can safely deploy to the extent possible." Galula also emphasizes on winning over the Guerillas foe weakening the insurgent force.⁴⁸ The Sri Lankan success after winning over Karuna factions adds credence to the Galulian approach. Galula stresses the political, military, and economic dimensions of the COIN operation must be tightly integrated and mutually reinforcing. In his words, "Thus, a mimeograph machine may turn out to be more useful than a machine gun, a soldier trained as a pediatrician more important than mortar expert, cement more wanted than barbed wire, clerks more in demand than riflemen."⁴⁹ The SLG effort between the years of CFA and final offensive involved this very Galulian strategy of control and contact of population. The CFA allowed contact with the population and subsequent change of perception about SLG intentions in Tamil populations' minds. Galula's non kinetic means involve developing a political structure and addressing the

root causes of the insurgency. The support given to Karuna faction was a calculated move in providing a alternate political platform for Tamil population thus allowing them to delink from the LTTE.

Winning Strategy

The Sri Lanka finally learnt its lessons from past mistakes and was able to efficiently guide the effort of its political and military machinery to defeat LTTE. The pattern of Sri Lankan effort showed four stages of operations including kinetic - non-kinetic – kinetic – non-kinetic stages. The first kinetic stage lasted till 2001 cease fire where Sri Lankan focus was mainly to provide security to its population. This stage represented initial resolve of the Sri Lankan government in providing security and efforts to present a strong face to the local populace. This was followed by the non kinetic stage where Sri Lankan government was able to split LTTE. SLG was also fortuitous that its effort at denying sanctuary and supply to LTTE coincided with the international war on terrorism. The second stage is termed non-kinetic, however involved build up for the third kinetic phase. The Sri Lankan military undertook massive build up of capability in manpower, equipment and training. This was also the phase to target the population support for LTTE by addressing the root grievances of the population. Inclusion of Karuna as a Tamil representative was seen as the white flag to The first two stages are crucial in preparing the ground for the third kinetic stage. Galula writes that, the kinetic step of destroying the insurgent force has to be backed up with the effort of winning the confidence of the population, converting the remainder of insurgents by resettling them; and finally addressing the basic cause which caused the insurgency in first place.⁵⁰

The confidence of Tamil people can be won by resettlement of displaced people and steps taken for economic and infrastructure development of Tamil region. Similarly rehabilitation of the former guerilla soldiers who were forcibly inducted by LTTE, will address the vulnerable section that are most likely to take up arms again in the absence of suitable livelihood. The Sri Lankan government also faces the tough task of crafting an enduring political solution based on devolution of suitable autonomy, thus addressing the basic demands of Tamil population.

The defeat of LTTE stands as a testimony of the success of the kinetic approach in eliminating an insurgent force. However the defeat could not have been achieved without addressing the important issues of Sanctuary; Supply (insurgent logistics); and Support (population support). The Sri Lankan government was indeed fortunate that its quest to address these three “S” coincided with the international effort to address the war on terrorism. Today LTTE stands defeated, however to ensure that this defeat is permanent and this organization does not raise its head again in another form, Sri Lankan government will have to quickly follow up the kinetic success with a non kinetic strategy.

Indian COIN Approach

India learnt a bitter lesson in its involvement in Sri Lanka. The IPKF was not designed to be a counter insurgent force. India has learnt valuable lessons from the experience in Sri Lankan conflict and other insurgencies in many North and Eastern states. Other than the internal insurgencies India has also been part of various UN peacekeeping missions in insurgency and civil war prone areas of the world. Indian peace keeping force (IPKF) carried out major counter insurgency operation in Sri Lanka in 1987-89. The Indian success has been mixed. On one hand

India was hugely successful in wiping out Sikh insurgency in Punjab, the results in other areas specially Naxal prone areas have not been anything to gloss about. The IPKF was a major disaster and loss of face for India with hundreds of Indian casualties without any tangible success. . Since then India has continuously refined and evolved its approach in fighting insurgency. Today the Indian counter insurgency approach can be clearly linked to the master classical of Galula. This relationship of Indian approach and Galula can be understood by analyzing the Sub Conventional Operations (SCO) manual.

The Indian SCO manual puts all operations below conventional war in the category of sub conventional operations. The basic manual introduces SCO as operations requiring whole government approach and less of a military centric approach. It states, “Employment of armed forces is not the natural choice for countering the sub conventional threat.”⁵¹ It further gives two broad reasons for this concept mainly the nuclear factor and rising cost of conventional conflict. On one hand due to higher intensity of a nuclear war ensures that most nuclear states which are also likely to have large conventional military are unlikely to go to war with each other. On the other hand exorbitantly high cost of the conventional war has become a deterrent for such wars. Thus the conflicts in future are likely to be sub conventional

The doctrine further defines the characteristics of SCO. It differentiates it on intensity, actors, duration, means employed, objective, tactics used, resources and its corporate nature. The interesting comparison is to the corporate nature of irregular forces. It argues the corporate competitiveness between various irregular forces. It states that these forces collaborate, assist, compete, merge or split like other corporate entities for money, power and influence. The doctrine defines SCO as “all action undertaken by the armed forces to counter the asymmetric threat posed by the irregular force. The term includes insurgency, militancy,

asymmetric warfare, proxy war and terrorism.” It goes on to explain SCO as a set of civic, diplomatic or military actions undertaken by armed forces. Doctrine states that SCO is inherently reactive to offensive actions by the irregular forces. In the next chapter doctrine identifies SCO as a global challenge and states the principles of SCO. It outlines the global challenges faced by SCO in dealing with terror finance; arms smuggling; moral support; and NBC threat. The principles of SCO include primacy of civil control; centrality of population; multi-pronged strategy; adherence to criminal justice system; upholding of human rights; importance of public perception; and preference for paramilitary forces. It also includes military principles of primacy of Intelligence; Surveillance; specialized training; responsiveness; and morale.

The doctrine divides the response in national and military strategy. It gives overarching guidelines on use of optimal force; preference for non-lethal weapons; maintaining a people friendly approach; keeping synergy with civil administration and other government agencies. It introduces the concept of “Home and Hearth” which aims at integrating local population in village defense committees (VDC) for effective security of an area. The next two chapters deal with the employment of Special Forces and airpower in SCO. The employment of air power is to be primarily in supportive role rather than offensive role. It allocates Intelligence, target acquisition, precision attack along with air mobility and casualty evacuation roles to air power.

The Indian SCO manual primarily has an Indian focus to deal with the sub conventional threats faced by the country. It is primarily focused for operations within own population and thus portrays a cautious approach. The analysis of the document reveals a direct connection with Galulian strategy. The Indian approach gives primacy to winning the support of population; requirement for understanding and addressing the root cause; and importance of action with

restraint in coordination with the local civil administration. The doctrine only gives generalized guidelines at strategic level.

The Indian doctrine states, “Employment of armed forces is not the natural choice for countering the sub conventional threat.”⁵² It provides that military should be one of the means considered by the government in dealing with insurgency. Even Galula says “armed forces are but one of the many instruments of power available to the counter insurgent.”⁵³ The Indian doctrine focuses on the centrality of the population in its strategy of Hearth and Homes. Galula all the while talks of the population being the biggest center of gravity in a counter insurgent fight. Indian doctrine advises a restrictive approach mixing kinetic and non-kinetic means with its strategy of “iron fist in a velvet glove.”⁵⁴ It states that although people friendly approach is advisable however it should not be construed as a weakness by the insurgent force. It advocates that the right amount of force at the right time though being inconvenient to people is required to instill confidence in the people against a insurgent.⁵⁵ Galula when deliberating on control of the population also argues that the will of counter insurgent initially has to be imposed by force.

Conclusion

No one strategy can be templated in a counter insurgency fight. Each situation is unique and presents its own challenges. The effort should be to apply the lessons learnt in past and modify it for the present and future. The Indian doctrine gives one example where the lessons from Galula have been modified in a unique Indian approach. It has yielded considerable results in Indian COIN fights. The Sri Lanka also learnt its lessons from past mistakes and was able to efficiently guide the effort of its political and military machinery to defeat LTTE.

The lessons out of this thesis point to alternating Kinetic and non-kinetic approach by counter insurgent to be the most effective. Galula and Indian doctrine both advocate a kinetic and non-kinetic approach. The pattern of Sri Lankan effort also showed four stages of operations including kinetic – non-kinetic – kinetic – non-kinetic stages.

The defeat of LTTE stands as a testimony of the success of the kinetic approach in eliminating an insurgent force. However the defeat could not have been achieved without addressing the important issues of Sanctuary; Supply (insurgent logistics); and Support (population support). The Sri Lankan government was indeed fortunate that its quest to address these three “S” coincided with the international effort to address the war on terrorism. The other two “S”, Security and Suborning the enemy played equally important part in the overall success. The Sri Lankan victory also point at the importance of the other factors out the control of the counter insurgent. In the Sri Lankan case some of them were election results of Indian and Sri Lankan politics; global war on terrorism; or the unintended effect of CFA.

Thus a winning strategy would encompass an alternating kinetic and non-kinetic approach at the same time focusing on the five “S”s; Security; Support; Sanctuary; Supply; and Suborning the enemy. This paper has dwelled on some of the factors for the defeat of LTTE and highlighted that a mixed kinetic and non-kinetic approach backed with some influential external factors can defeat a seemingly undefeatable insurgency. The biggest lesson which stands highlighted is the fact that history presents examples of all conflicts and a good strategist should be able to apply them with suitable modifications to adjust to different contextual circumstances. Some of the books written on the subject like Galula’s “Counterinsurgency Warfare” give a deep

insight and actually lay down the strategic framework on which the conflict can be built by a counterinsurgent.



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