

THE EFFECTIVE USE OF ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER
IN COUNTERINSURGENCY: A STUDY ON THE LESSONS
FROM SRI LANKA 1983-2004 AND 2005-2009

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General Studies

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTIVE USE OF ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER IN
COUNTERINSURGENCY: A STUDY ON THE LESSONS FROM SRI LANKA 1983-
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ACRONYMS

CFA	Ceasefire Agreement
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CSIS	Centers for Strategic and International Studies
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
GSL	Government of Sri Lanka
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
SAF	Sri Lankan Air Force
SLA	Sri Lankan Army
SLAF	Sri Lankan Armed Forces
SLN	Sri Lankan Navy
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

In the 21st century, many nations faced with the threat of insurgency, terrorism, and separatism continue to rely on enemy-centric counterinsurgency (COIN) methods. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) controlled much of Northeastern Sri Lanka for over two decades. It was not until 2009 that the Sri Lankan government defeated the LTTE. The Sri Lankan government used coordinated and decisive political, economic, and military instruments of power to defeat the LTTE insurgency.

Proposed Research Question

How did the Sri Lankan government use and coordinate national power (political, economic, and military) to achieve victory over the LTTE insurgency?

Secondary Research Questions

What were the roles played by the political, military, and international leaders, what were the effects of monetary, armament, and supply sanctions on LTTE operations, and what were the effects of naval blockade, Air Force interdiction and intelligence assistance to the regular Sri Lankan Army (SLA)?

Key Terms

The terms below highlight major players in the Sri Lankan conflict and are used to better frame its context:

Counterinsurgency (COIN). The blend of comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously contain insurgency and address its root causes.

Eelam. The homeland of the Tamil people.

Enemy-Centric. COIN method focused on defeating a particular enemy group.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The Federal Bureau of Investigation designated this group as a terrorist organization determined to create an independent homeland for Tamils in Sri Lanka. The organization pioneered the use of suicide belts and suicide bombers including female suicide volunteers. The LTTE is the only terrorist organization credited with killing two world leaders and several high ranking ministers. The Government of Sri Lanka militarily defeated the LTTE in 2009. Vellupilai Prabhakaran was the political and military leader of the LTTE.

The Government of Sri Lanka (GSL). The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is a republic composed of an executive branch, a unicameral legislature, and an independent judiciary. Regular elections are held for the executive and legislative branch. The members of the judiciary are appointed officials. Currently, the Sinhalese majority holds key positions in the GSL.

Population-Centric. COIN method focused on securing and controlling a given population or populations.

The Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF). Is composed of the Sri Lankan Army, Navy, and Air Force.

The Sri Lanka Army (SLA). Is the largest component of the SLAF composed of approximately 250,000 active, reserve, and guard members.

The Sri Lankan Navy (SLN). Is the naval arm of the SLAF.

The Sri Lankan Air Force (SAF). Is the air arm of the SLAF.

Undiyal. Tamil transnational money transfer services.

Limitations

The research will examine the actions of the civilian and military leadership of Sri Lanka within its natural territorial boundary. It is limited to the maritime areas in the Indian Ocean, within reach of the Sri Lankan government, as well as actions in the international stage. This thesis will not examine the role played by neighboring states in the South Asian region (i.e. India, Pakistan). Analysis of economic sanctions is restricted to the Tamil Diaspora and the role played by international organizations in isolating the LTTE insurgency. The human rights controversy that arose from the conflicts is outside the scope of this thesis.

Significance of Research

Research into the Sri Lankan conflict is significant because it unveils how a small, determined, democratic nation defeated a persistent insurgency. The insurgency effectively used terrorism to attack the government. The analysis will show how the insurgency was defeated and what lessons can be drawn from the Sri Lankan model of fighting insurgency.

Stage Setting

May 17, 2009, dawn breaks over the Northern coastal area of Mullivaikal, a small township located in Northeastern Sri Lanka. This day marks the culmination of the GSL's quest to end the insurgency of the LTTE, and also marked the end of the Tamil's quest for an independent homeland. Government controlled television stations showed the

images of the dead body of Vellupilai Prabhakaran, the leader of the feared insurgent group, the LTTE. The conflict in Sri Lanka ended with a military solution imposed by the GSL.

Sri Lanka is a pear shaped island nation situated in the Indian Ocean just across from Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The Sinhalese ethnic group comprises 75 percent of the population. The Sinhalese are followers of the Buddhist religion.¹ The Sinhalese inhabit the Southern and middle parts of the island. The second largest group, the Tamils, comprise about 18 percent of the population and consists mainly of Hindus who speak the Tamil language.² Tamils occupy Northern and Eastern areas of Sri Lanka. The Tamils consider the Northeastern areas of Sri Lanka or “Tamil Eelam,” or the “Tamil Homeland.”³ The remaining eight percent of the Sri Lankan population are Muslims and other groups.⁴

Roots of the LTTE insurrection

The origins of the insurgency is normally attributed to the efforts of the majority Sinhalese group to make Sri Lanka a “Sinhalese” state with the passage of the “Sinhalese Only Act.”⁵ This Act made Sinhala the official language of Sri Lanka. Actions by the Sinhalese majority to “Sinhalize” Sri Lanka, coupled with real and imagined injustices

¹U.S. Department of State, *Background Notes: Sri Lanka*, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5249.htm> (accessed May 23, 2011).

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Books LLC, *Military History of Sri Lanka* (Memphis, TN: Books LLC, 2010), 2.

against the Tamil minority, led to ethnic clashes between the two ethnic groups. In 1976, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, a Tamil, established the LTTE to fight for an independent homeland for the Tamils in Northeastern Sri Lanka.⁶

LTTE Ends, Ways and Means

In an interview in April 2002, LTTE Chief Prabhakaran stated, “The struggle for political independence is the demand of Tamil people. The question whether we accept the hegemony of the Sri Lankan government has not arisen.”⁷ From the start of the insurgency until its end in 2009, Prabhakaran remained the leader of the LTTE. For Prabhakaran and the LTTE, the desired end state was an independent homeland for the Tamil populace in Northeastern Sri Lanka. The way to achieve this end state was through secession from Sri Lanka. The way to accomplish this objective was through armed struggle that involved insurgency and terrorism. The means to accomplish the objective of a Tamil homeland was by mobilizing the Tamil community and through funding of the struggle by the Tamil Diaspora.

GSL Ends, Ways, and Means

In a speech given at the Buddhist Holy Shrine of the Temple of the Tooth on September 2005, Prime Minister and Sri Lankan Presidential candidate Mahinda Rajapaksa pledged, as had all his predecessors, to “protect the unitary character of the

⁶K. Allan Kronstadt and Bruce Vaughn, *Sri Lanka: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 8.

⁷Anton Balasingham, *Sri Lanka hails Tamil peace overture*, 2002. http://articles.cnn.com/2002-04-11/world/srilankan.peace_1_anton-balasingham-tamil-tigers-peace-talks?_s=PM:asiapcf (accessed May 23, 2011).

country.”⁸ Prime Minister Rajapaksa was later elected President of Sri Lanka in November 2005. For President Rajapaksa and the GSL, the desired end state was the maintenance of the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. The way to achieve this end state was to defeat the LTTE militarily. The means to achieve the end state was to apply the enemy-centric, Rajapaksa COIN Model and some population-centric COIN methods.

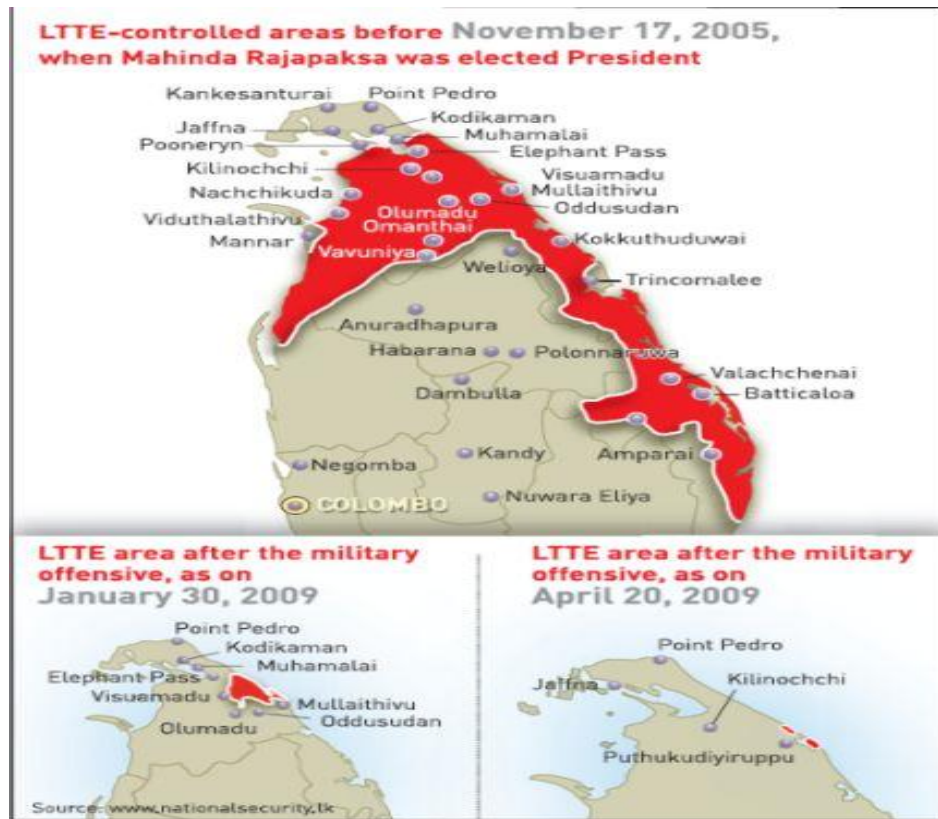


Figure 1. LTTE Controlled Areas

Source: Frontline, *Why LTTE Failed*, 2009, <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2610/stories/20090522261001200.htm> (accessed May 23, 2011).

⁸Taipei Times, *Sri Lanka's peace process still hanging in the balance*, 2005, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2005/09/15/2003271755> (accessed May 23, 2011).

Table 1. GSL Leaders and LTTE Leader

<u>WAR</u>	<u>GSL LEADER</u>	<u>LTTE LEADER</u>	<u>RESULT</u>
Eelam War I 1983-1987	Jayewardene	Prabhakaran	Ceasefire
Eelam War II 1990-1995	Premadasa Wijetunga Kumaratunga	Prabhakaran	Ceasefire
Eelam War III 1995-2002	Kumaratunga	Prabhakaran	Ceasefire
Eelam War IV 2006-2009	Rajapaksa	Prabhakaran	LTTE Defeat

Source: Created by author.

Eelam War I

It is generally agreed by scholars that the sparks that lit the revolt began when the LTTE cadres attacked SLA soldiers on July 23, 1983.⁹ The SLA suffered 13 dead as a result of the attack.¹⁰ Incensed, the Sinhalese population rioted and killed thousands of Tamils in Sinhalese dominated areas.¹¹ The LTTE retaliated and killed hundreds of

⁹Phillip M. Parker, ed., *LTTE: Webster's Timeline History 1924-2007* (San Diego: Icon Group, Inc., 2009), 5.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

Sinhalese soldiers and civilians. Ethnic Sinhalese were driven out of the Tamil dominated areas in Jaffna and the surrounding areas through terror tactics such as the Kent and Dollar Farm massacres which resulted in slayings of unarmed civilians by the LTTE.¹² The SLA had the LTTE surrounded in Jaffna in 1987, but India intervened for strategic and humanitarian reasons.¹³ The conflict temporarily ended with an Indian government brokered ceasefire between the GSL and the LTTE.

Eelam War II

The GSL and the LTTE engaged in peace negotiations in the early 1990s. However, sporadic fighting broke out between the two groups. Eelam War II was marked by LTTE ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population in Tamil majority areas, specifically in the Jaffna peninsula area.¹⁴ A LTTE terrorist assassinated former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.¹⁵ The conflict ended with a ceasefire agreement (CFA) between the GSL and the LTTE in January 1995. However, the CFA did not end the conflict.

Eelam War III

The third wave of violence between the GSL and the LTTE began in April 1995 with the beginning of suicide naval attacks against the SLN.¹⁶ The naval action was

¹²Books LLC, *Military History of Sri Lanka*, 36.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Parker, *LTTE: Webster's Timeline History 1924-2007*, 8.

¹⁶Ibid., 41.

shortly followed by ground attacks by SLA units against LTTE positions. After several major battles, the SLA prevailed and regained Jaffna city. However, the SLA lost key defensive positions in the Jaffna peninsula. The LTTE gained control of vast amounts of territory and effectively had administrative control of an independent state complete with a functioning government and military. An official CFA was signed by the GSL and the LTTE in February 2002.¹⁷

Eelam War IV

The final iteration of the Sri Lankan conflict began after the breakdown of a CFA between the GSL and the LTTE in 2005. An exasperated GSL resolved to end the LTTE insurgency by pursuing military victory at all costs, and after a series of conventional battles, the SLAF defeated the LTTE in May 2009.

Summary

After several decades of fighting a resilient LTTE, the GSL finally defeated the LTTE in 2009. Few books have been written about the final conflict known as Eelam War IV. The GSL tightly controlled reporting from the front. During the conflict, the GSL regulated access to areas where the fighting took place. In rare cases when access was granted to journalists, the GSL provided military escorts. The next chapter examines the written literature from the conflict to better determine what enabled the GSL's victory over the LTTE.

¹⁷Parker, *LTTE: Webster's Timeline History 1924-2007*, 13.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The LTTE insurgency in Sri Lanka ended in 2009 after nearly three decades of conflict intermixed with periods of peace. During the conflict and the subsequent end to hostilities in Sri Lanka, many books analyzed the conflict in isolation and in comparison to other conflicts around the world. The literature review chapter examines several aspects related to the research question. The review used analysis and verifiable evidence presented in several categories. Category I was grouped into books published by renowned authors or journalists with an in-depth coverage of the conflict in Sri Lanka. Category II was grouped into articles and documents collected from military publications and “think tanks.” Category III was comprised of Internet Website articles and official and unclassified electronic materials retrieved from official Sri Lankan government websites and other relevant political-military websites from various regions. The collected data from each category was divided and presented in two groups: Group I data encompasses the period from 1990 to 2004 and Group II data covers the period from 2005 to 2009.

Category 1–Published Books

M.R. Narayan Swamy is a renowned author who has published several books covering the LTTE insurgency. His first book published titled, *Tigers of Sri Lanka*, covered the birth of the LTTE insurgency. He also wrote and published the only biography of the leader of the LTTE insurgency, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, *Inside an Elusive Mind*. His latest book, *The Tiger Vanquished*, analyzed the final collapse of the

LTTE. In addition to written books, Mr. Swamy is a close confidant of key decision makers in the GSL. In *The Tiger Vanquished*, he expanded on the views of Defense Minister Gotabaya Rajapaksa and detailed observations and viewpoints from both sides of the Sri Lankan conflict as well as input from various experts from other countries. In the final analysis for the Sri Lankan side, Mr. Swamy stated that the willingness of the GSL's political leadership to use all elements of national power is what defeated the LTTE.¹⁸ While at the same time, the LTTE leadership, including Prabhakaran, miscalculated the determination of the GSL's leadership.¹⁹ Swamy concludes in his book that there were initially five reasons that ultimately led to the defeat of the LTTE. Four of the five factors are directly linked to LTTE self-demise. The first factor was the assassination of Indian President Rajiv Gandhi. The second factor was the refusal to participate in the peace efforts in 2003 and the continued conscription of child soldiers. The third factor was the political and military defection of the LTTE eastern wing led by Colonel Karuna to the government side. The fourth factor was the LTTE refusal to participate in the 2005 Sri Lankan nationwide election which saw the defeat of the Presidential candidate Ranil Wickremasinghe and the ensuing election by a slight margin of the hardliner Mahinda Rajapaksa.²⁰ The fifth reason, which was directly tied to the GSL, was the unity of the top leadership of Sri Lanka.²¹ President Rajapaksa ruled Sri

¹⁸M. R. Narayan Swamy, *The Tiger Vanquished* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc, 2010), 179.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

Lanka, his brother Defense Minister Gotabaya Rajapaksa ran the campaign against the LTTE, and his other brother, Basil Rajapaksa handled political hurdles within the government.²² The political dimension was vital in the final stages of the military campaign when criticism from other countries, especially from Western nations, was unusually heavy.

In Mr. Swamy's, *Inside an Elusive Mind*, he delved into the life of the military and political chief of the LTTE, Mr. Prabhakaran. The book profiled the life of the Tamil leader which started with the military operation that ignited the first iteration of the Sri Lankan Civil War and covered the subsequent wars that followed. Contained in the book are the LTTE's initially cozy relationship with India and how the Indian government forces trained LTTE cadres. Later, the book analyzed the subsequent breakdown of relations between the two parties which eventually led to conflict with Indian Peacekeeping Forces and the subsequent assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Also covered in the book are various LTTE military operations against the Indian, GSL, and rival Tamil organizations. Throughout the book, it emphasized the rise to power of Prabhakaran and the LTTE.

Another book that proved valuable in the research was Phillip M. Parker's *LTTE: Webster's Timeline History*. The book covers Sri Lanka's history from 1924 to 2007. The book highlights significant events including the beginnings of the armed conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. This book made it easy to divide the conflict into two significant time periods through its dissection of yearly events in Sri Lanka. Key events mentioned in the book include the 1983 beginnings of the ethnic conflict. Other notable

²²Swamy, *The Tiger Vanquished*, 179.

events included the failure of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces mission in Sri Lanka and the subsequent breakdown of relations between India and the LTTE as well as between India and the Sri Lanka. In addition to military issues, the book also covers important diplomatic and political events. In the diplomatic arena, the book covered the beginnings of the Norwegian attempts to broker peace talks between the LTTE and the GSL. In the political stage, the book details the significant political events for the GSL including the election of political leaders.

A book by Asoka Bandarage titled, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy* examined the conflict in Sri Lanka through multipolar analysis that looked through domestic, regional, and international lenses. The book suggested that the conflict between the GSL and the LTTE was an international issue and not an ethnic or terrorist issue.²³ From a domestic perspective, nationalists from both sides viewed the struggle through the lens of ethnic conflict.²⁴ The regional perspective took into account the fact that the Indian state of Tamil Nadu served as an incubator of most of the conflict in Sri Lanka.²⁵ The Indian government, along with the substantial Tamil population in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, initially supported and armed the LTTE as a proxy for its geopolitical strategy in Sri Lanka. From an international perspective, the Tamil population, including the Tamil Diaspora,

²³Asoka Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism Ethnicity, Political Economy* (New York: IUniverse, Inc., 2009), 7.

²⁴Ibid., 18-19.

²⁵Ibid., 20.

highlighted different views of the conflict.²⁶ The book pointed out that the majority of the Sinhalese population viewed the long-running conflict in Sri Lanka through the lens of terrorism.²⁷ The GSL, under President Rajapaksa, also viewed the conflict with the LTTE through the same lens. The book stated that the international community continually insisted that the GSL negotiate with a terrorist organization while at the same time the international community refused to negotiate with other terrorist organization.²⁸ In the book, it stated that the LTTE refused to give up their position of seeking an independent state.²⁹ The GSL also refused to give into the idea of federalism or autonomy for the Tamils as they saw it as a step towards ultimate separatism.³⁰ Each party to the conflict held fast to uncompromising positions.

Category 2-Articles

The recent conflict in Sri Lanka remains a controversial issue replete with charges of disproportionate use of force and issues related to humanitarian suffering. A balanced analysis of the conflict in Sri Lanka is given through recent and diverse analyses by independent authors and think tanks from the United States (U.S.), Europe, and South Asia.

²⁶Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka*, 20-21.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 14.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 16.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 21.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 22.

Author Sinharaja Tammita-Delgoda wrote a paper titled, *Sri Lanka the Last Phase in Eelam War IV: From Chundikulam to Pudumattalan*. The paper detailed the operational progress of the SLA during Eelam War IV. Embedded with the 55th Division of the SLA from March to April 2009, Tammita-Delgoda observed and recorded events on the battlefield from April 2009 to May 2009. According to Tammita-Delgoda, the “multi-pronged strategy” adapted by General Sarath Fonseka allowed no breathing room for the LTTE to maneuver.³¹ The SLA’s 55th Division advanced in the direction of the coast, the 53rd and 58th Divisions advanced toward the East while the 59th Division advanced through the jungles.³² He noted that the new “multi-pronged strategy was a departure from the past practice advancing on one axis.”³³ In particular, he observed that the soldiers and officers were experienced, motivated and superbly trained.³⁴ Unconventional methods and innovation became the norm. For example, General Prasana De Silva, Commander of the 55th Division, made it a policy to maximize everyone’s involvement in the operational planning process.³⁵ Tammita-Delgoda concluded that Eelam War IV was an infantry operation supported by air power and artillery.³⁶ He viewed Eelam War IV from a narrow limited perspective.

³¹Sinharaja Tammita-Delgoda, *Sri Lanka: The Last Phase in the Eelam War IV* (New Delhi: Centre for Land Warfare Studies, 2009), 1.

³²*Ibid.*, 2.

³³*Ibid.*, 1.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 1.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 7.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 22.

The U.S. based think tank, Centers for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), is an independent and private organization that specializes in public policy and other international issues. CSIS produced a report titled, *Sri Lanka: Peace through War*. The article detailed the beginning of the fourth iteration of hostilities between the GSL and the LTTE. On the political front, the CSIS study claimed that both the GSL and the LTTE wanted a military resolution to the conflict.³⁷ The LTTE broke the existing truce when it resumed terrorist activities in 2006. The GSL, under the leadership of newly elected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, was equally determined to find a military resolution.³⁸ The article also touched on aspects of military strategy. The article discussed the GSL's use of a "decapitation strategy" to eliminate the top leadership of the LTTE.³⁹ The successful integration of air power, deep penetration units, and intelligence culminated in the elimination of several members of the LTTE senior leadership.⁴⁰ On the economic side of the conflict, the article claimed that LTTE funding channels were limited due to interdiction by foreign governments. However, funding for LTTE activities continued through "extortion among the Tamil Diaspora."⁴¹

Another well-respected company is the RAND Corporation. The RAND Corporation is a non-profit organization specializing in research and analysis in various

³⁷Raja Karthikeya Gundu, "Sri Lanka: Peace through War?" South Asia Monitor no. 115, Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 2008, 1.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

fields of study including security and defense policy. In one exhaustive study titled, *Beyond Al Qaeda Part 2: The Outer Rings of a Terrorist Universe*, RAND exposed the LTTE methods of funding its organization. The LTTE fueled its insurgency through the vast network of Tamils in North America, Europe and other regions. The LTTE extensively used organized illegal trafficking networks complete with logistical capability such as a shipping fleet, and couriers for human trafficking, arms smuggling, and narcotics trade.⁴² The monetary amounts gathered in these various illegal ventures were in the millions of dollars. The events of 11 September 2001 made illicit and criminal activities more difficult for the LTTE.

In 2010, RAND released an in-depth study titled, *How Insurgencies End*. In the quantitative study of approximately 89 insurgencies, RAND concluded that contrary to conventional wisdom, governments tend to be victorious over insurgencies in the long run.⁴³ The study noted that governments willingly accept the suffering of their citizens if national survival is at stake.⁴⁴ The political and military leadership of Sri Lanka knew this well.⁴⁵ The LTTE showed itself capable of conducting suicide attacks against Defense Minister Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Chief of Staff General Fonseka. In both cases, both men eluded death. One conclusion of the study stated, in order for the government to

⁴²Angel Rabasa, Peter Chalk, Kim Cragin, Sara A. Daly, Heather S. Gregg, Theodore W. Karasik, Kevin A. O'Brien, and William Rosenau, *Beyond Al-Qaeda Part 2: The Outer Rings of Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2006), 103.

⁴³Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010).

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., 113.

defeat insurgency, the government must willingly limit civil freedoms to achieve temporary gains.⁴⁶

Another CSIS study is a monograph titled *Urban Battlefield of South Asia*. The monograph studied insurgencies in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. In the Sri Lankan case, the study tracked the 20 year progress of the LTTE insurgency. The study found that the LTTE developed a complex and coordinated military, political, economic, and intelligence organization complete with a standing army, a navy (Sea Tigers), an Air Force (Air Tigers), a suicide unit (Black Tigers), and an intelligence unit.⁴⁷ The LTTE also had a merchant fleet used for human trafficking, smuggling weapons, and illegal narcotics.⁴⁸ The LTTE was a learning organization. It made use of academic functions like cross training with other militant organizations in the Middle East, as well as corporate functions like “outsourcing” by trolling for ideas from Tamil students in Sri Lankan Universities.⁴⁹ The LTTE also acted like a Non-government organization. LTTE affiliated agencies raised money in over 40 countries where Tamil immigrants were present.⁵⁰ In addition, the LTTE also had active and legal business interests and partnerships that provided a steady stream of funding. LTTE investments in the private

⁴⁶Connable and Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, 178.

⁴⁷C. Christine Fair, *Urban Battlefields in South Asia: Lessons learned from Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2004), 11.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 31.

sector included farms, stocks, bonds, real estate, and small business partnerships.⁵¹ However, the events of September 11, 2001 changed the whole dynamic when closer scrutiny by governments of financial transactions degraded the LTTE's ability to fund the insurgency.⁵² The GSL, on the other hand, had no integrated response to the LTTE threat. Each agency operated independently and GSL agencies were forced to work together in "ad-hoc" efforts during specific periods.⁵³ In the initial stages of the conflict, the GSL lacked an integrated approach to deal with the insurgency. The result of the lack of GSL coordination was often fatal. The LTTE infiltrated into GSL controlled areas and launched spectacular attacks including assassinations and attacks on key infrastructure targets. In the early part of 2000, the GSL incorporated several improvements including coordinating police and military intelligence activities. The report concluded that the GSL strategies lacked coordination, which detracted from the overall effort to combat the insurgency.⁵⁴

The Jamestown Foundation, a conservative think tank, produced an article titled *Sri Lanka: Beijing's Growing Foothold in the Indian Ocean*. The author of the report, Dr. Vijay Sakhuja, is a regional expert at the Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, Singapore. The report detailed China's involvement in the Sri Lankan conflict. The report noted that China repeatedly issues frequent denials of involvement in the Sri Lankan conflict. The author revealed that both countries have deep and congruent ties. The top leadership of

⁵¹Fair, *Urban Battlefields in South Asia*, 31.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 37.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 178.

GSL and China issued a joint statement in 2007 to fight “the three evil forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism” as well as pledges of “coordination on regional and international counterterrorism action.”⁵⁵ The report examined specific types of Chinese aid including military equipment, financial support, political, diplomatic, and major economic infrastructure projects. China’s use of elements of its national power to aid the GSL, is in line with its “strings of pearls” strategy to extend its influence in the Indian Ocean.⁵⁶

In the fourth quarter of 2010, the National Defense University *Joint Forces Quarterly* produced a report on the LTTE insurgency titled “Understanding Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers.” The author, Major Niels Smith, is a Subject Matter Expert in COIN and counterterrorism. Instead of focusing on political aspects of the insurgency, Smith’s article expanded on the eight military principles of the Sri Lankan COIN: (1) political will, (2) go to hell (eliminate and annihilate), (3) no negotiations, (4) regulate media, (5) no ceasefire, (6) complete operational freedom, (7) accent of young commanders, and (8) keep your neighbors in the loop.⁵⁷ Combined together, the eight military principles are called the Rajapaksa Model. The Rajapaksa Model is named after incumbent GSL President Mahinda Rajapaksa. In 2005, President Rajapaksa won the national election by promising to the end LTTE insurgency.⁵⁸ In his article, Smith

⁵⁵Vijay Sakhuja, *Sri Lanka: Beijing’s Growing Foothold in the Indian Ocean* (Washington DC: The Jamestown Foundation, June 12, 2009).

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Niel A. Smith, “Understanding Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers,” *Joint Force Quarterly* no. 59 (4th Quarter 2010): 40.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 42.

suggested that other factors and world events from 2001 to 2006 shifted the odds in favor of a GSL victory. These factors included political issues like the defection of a senior LTTE leader and sizable numbers of Tamil cadre to the GSL side.⁵⁹ Economic hardships also hampered LTTE operations. Tamil Diaspora groups in North America and Europe could not legally provide financial assistance to the LTTE openly because foreign governments designated the LTTE as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).⁶⁰ China's massive economic assistance of one billion dollars to the GSL effort proved a decisive factor in the final defeat of the LTTE.⁶¹ In the diplomatic arena, China provided a diplomatic shield for the GSL. China promptly blocked all the United Nations (UN) resolutions alleging human rights violations by the GSL.⁶² With the necessary funding and diplomatic cover, the GSL continued its unimpeded military offensive against the LTTE. Major Niels credited the tsunami that shattered Sri Lanka in 2004 in contributing to the LTTE's demise. The tsunami affected large portions of the LTTE territory and inflicted sizeable economic losses on the Tamil population.⁶³ Major Niels concluded that the defeat of the LTTE was a combination of several factors including a divided LTTE leadership, loss of external support from the Tamil Diaspora, increased international

⁵⁹Smith, "Understanding Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers," 43.

⁶⁰Ibid., 42-43.

⁶¹Ibid., 43.

⁶²Ibid., 43.

⁶³Ibid., 43.

antiterrorism measures after September 11, 2001, environmental factors, and the massive assistance of China to the GSL effort.⁶⁴

Future Directions International, an Australian think tank specializing in Pacific and Asian affairs, published an article titled, *The End of Sri Lanka's Insurgency: Implications*. The main point of the article is that long running insurgencies can be defeated; however, the article also pointed out that the Tamil Diaspora remains ready to support the idea of separatism, should the situation present itself.⁶⁵ A new chapter in Sri Lankan history began with the demise of the LTTE. The article predicted that with the LTTE's defeat, democratic Tamil institutions may flourish and Sri Lankans, both Tamil and Sinhalese, may start the path towards national reconciliation.⁶⁶

Another article from Future Directions International titled, *Sri Lanka–The New Great Game*, examines the roles played by the international community in the Sri Lankan conflict. In short, Western powers, including the U.S. wanted the GSL to resolve the conflict through diplomacy.⁶⁷ The GSL, under the leadership of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, wanted a military solution to the conflict because previous attempts at negotiations with the LTTE failed. Unable to get Western support because of the hard-line position against the LTTE, the GSL turned to China and Iran for assistance. China provided weapons as well as economic aid in the form of infrastructure development

⁶⁴Ibid., 44.

⁶⁵Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, *The End of Sri Lanka's Insurgency: Implications* (West Perth, Australia: Future Directions International, Inc., 2009), 1.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, *Sri Lanka –The New Great Game* (West Perth, Australia: Future Directions International, Inc., 2010), 1.

projects valued at over 2 billion dollars.⁶⁸ Iran provided a combined package of generous financial aid as well as infrastructure projects valued at over 1 billion dollars.⁶⁹ The GSL manipulated and managed the geopolitical tussle between the Western powers and the rising powers of India, China, and Iran to its advantage.

On January 13, 2009, the U.S. Government published an official COIN guide drafted by members of the U.S. Army, the United Kingdom Royal Marines, and the Department of State Political Military Affairs Bureau titled, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*. Secretary of Defense Gates and Secretary of State Rice signed off on the partnership document. The guide used a whole of government and a whole of society approach to tackle COIN. The central theme of the COIN guide is to maintain control through the use of political, economic, information, and security mechanisms.⁷⁰ According to the guide, the purpose of COIN is to establish “support” for the legitimate government and to stifle or neutralize the insurgency.⁷¹ There are two approaches to COIN. The enemy-centric approach concentrates COIN efforts against an adversary, while the population-centric approach concentrates COIN efforts towards securing the populace.⁷² Success in COIN comes in the form of an authentic government, a neutralized and disarmed insurgency, and successfully reintegrating insurgents into

⁶⁸DeSilva-Ranasinghe, *Sri Lanka –The New Great Game*, 3.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁰U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Political Military Affairs, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* (Washington, DC: Department of State, January 2009), 17.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 14.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 16.

society.⁷³ The guide provided roles for each government agency and other significant sectors in society in a COIN environment. Links are provided to government websites and additional tools are also provided to measure and assess task performance in COIN operations. The guide is one of many that try to address the complex issues of COIN and it comes closest to bringing all elements of national power and society together.

Tim Fish, a reporter for the global Defense and Security Analysis Company IHS Jane, examined the strategy used by the SLN to defeat the LTTE Sea Tigers. In the article, *Sri Lanka learns to counter Sea Tigers' swarm tactics*, Tim Fish analyzed the evolution of the SLN from a law enforcement force to a full-fledged navy. The article claimed that the GSL victory would have been impossible were it not for the actions of the SLN.⁷⁴ At the onset of the naval conflict between the LTTE and SLN, the LTTE held the upper hand in both tactics and resources. The LTTE Sea Tiger wing supplied its cadres with weapons and used surface and underwater asymmetric tactics to inflict several defeats on the SLN.⁷⁵ In due course, the SLN adjusted its naval strategy and basically mimicked the LTTE naval tactics on an industrial scale with the development of the "Small Boats Concept."⁷⁶ Hundreds of locally produced small naval craft were integrated into the SLN and hundreds of naval personnel were recruited and trained to

⁷³Ibid., 16.

⁷⁴Tim Fish, "Sri Lanka Learns to Counter Sea Tigers' Swarm Tactics," *Jane's Navy International* 114, no. 2 (March 2009): 25.

⁷⁵Ibid., 25.

⁷⁶Ibid., 24.

man the new vessels.⁷⁷ The Small Boats Concept and the training of hundreds of new naval personnel were important factors in countering the Sea Tigers. However, the tipping point of the naval conflict came when the SLN destroyed the LTTE “floating warehouse vessels” which supplied the LTTE from overseas bases.⁷⁸ In addition to its naval strategy, the SLN also assisted the ground effort with 15,000 naval personnel fulfilling the role of ground units in the “hold” stage of COIN operations.⁷⁹ The military effort came with much needed support from the GSL civilian leadership. In the article, the Chief of the SLN, Vice Admiral Karannagoda, stated that “The president with the secretary of defense have kept the armed forces together and galvanized the support of the people behind them.”⁸⁰ After several decades of fighting the LTTE, the SLN at its current state is a repository of knowledge for fighting COIN in a naval environment.

The SAF released a report from *Air Forces Monthly* authored by Alan Warnes titled, “Force Report Sri Lanka Air Force: Taming the Tigers.” The report outlined the progress made by the SAF in the conflict with the LTTE. The report examined the years of conflict from a SAF perspective. The report provided insights on the actions of the SAF in support of ground operations. At the onset of the conflict, the SAF provided close air support for SAF ground operations.⁸¹ The SAF suffered heavily as a result of enemy

⁷⁷Fish, “Sri Lanka Learns to Counter Sea Tigers’ Swarm Tactics,” 22-23.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 24.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 25.

⁸¹Alan Warnes, “Taming the Tigers,” *Air Forces Monthly* (June 2009): 70.

ground fire and the lack of “credible self defense systems.”⁸² The LTTE made heavy use of portable surface to air missiles as well as asymmetric attacks by LTTE suicide cadres against airbases.⁸³ The attacks demoralized the SAF aircrews because of the loss of several aircraft from Surface to air missile strikes. Morale for the SAF was “at an all time low.”⁸⁴ At the beginning of the 21st century, the SAF acquired more advanced and robust aircraft from Israel, China, and Russia.⁸⁵ Chinese, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Ukrainian pilots trained SAF aircrews in the use of the newly acquired aircraft.⁸⁶ The SAF did make some major contributions to the SLA effort. For example the SAF provided airmen to hold terrain that was cleared by the SLA.⁸⁷ The SAF augmentation to SLA operations allowed army units to move to the next objective.

Category 3-Internet Websites

The first online source examined by the researcher was the official government website of President Mahinda Rajapaksa. On the presidential website, the researcher examined the published interview given by President Rajapaksa in July 2009 to India’s *Tehelka* magazine. In the interview, President Rajapaksa insisted that he is a

⁸²Warnes, “Taming the Tigers,” 72.

⁸³Ibid., 74,

⁸⁴Ibid., 74.

⁸⁵Ibid., 73-74.

⁸⁶Ibid., 72-74.

⁸⁷Ibid., 70.

“nationalist,” “human rights lawyer,” and the legitimate leader of Sri Lanka.⁸⁸ He acknowledged the past grievances of the Tamil population and pledged not to repeat the same mistakes.⁸⁹ President Rajapaksa remained firm on the idea of a unified Sri Lanka and he categorically rejected the idea of a separate Tamil homeland.⁹⁰ In the interview, President Rajapaksa claimed that peace negotiations failed after the LTTE resumed terrorist activities. President Rajapaksa was committed to a political solution. He blamed the LTTE for the delays in implementing a political solution and he stated that a military solution was imposed only as a last resort.⁹¹ After two years of protracted negotiations with the LTTE, he decided to “eliminate terrorism first, and only then start the reconciliation process.”⁹² There are more interviews published on the presidential website. In most of the interviews, President Rajapaksa stayed on the theme of tackling terrorism, reconstruction, and the continuation of the political process.

Also examined in the research is the GSL Ministry of Defense Website. One online article refers to GSL Minister of Defense Gotabaya Rajapaksa as a “Master Strategist .”⁹³ In the online article, Gotabaya Rajapaksa claimed that “political will is the

⁸⁸The Sri Lankan Presidential Website, “President Mahinda Rajapaksa in an interview with India’s Tehelka Magazine,” July 31, 2009, http://www.president.gov.lk/inter_New.php?Id (accessed 23 May 2011).

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ministry of Defense Sri Lanka, “Winning Wars: political will is the key - Defense Secretary,” http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20100429_05 (accessed May 23, 2011).

supreme commander.”⁹⁴ Gotabaya Rajapaksa contends that previous GSL administrations were characterized by “inadequate, lax and effete political will.”⁹⁵ The first decisive factor was political will. In fact, a comprehensive study submitted to President Rajapaksa held the military blameless for the past failures and the political arm of the government was identified as the culprit behind the previous failures to defeat the LTTE.⁹⁶ Fortunately, after a comprehensive analysis of the past failures, the GSL arrived at a solution. The second decisive factor involved increasing the size of the SLAF.⁹⁷ Gotabaya Rajapaksa claimed that the third decisive solution for the GSL, conduct operations on several fronts and holding ground gained by the SLAF.⁹⁸ Holding territory meant depriving the LTTE of sanctuary areas. This strategy was made possible when the GSL increased the size of the armed forces. The fourth factor in the military victory against the LTTE introduced a new doctrine which involved the creation of Police Special Task Forces, specializing in executive protection, COIN and counterterrorism, and Navy and Air Force personnel assuming duties normally performed by the Army.⁹⁹ The fifth factor involved the induction of 42,000 members into a Civil Defense Force whose task was to provide village protection from LTTE assaults.¹⁰⁰ Finally, Gotabaya

⁹⁴Ministry of Defense Sri Lanka, “Winning Wars.”

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid., 179.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

Rajapaksa states that the GSL strength at the end of the military campaign was 450,000 members which he compared to the 30,000 soldiers at the beginning of the LTTE insurgency in the 1980s.¹⁰¹ The substantial increase in manpower allowed the SLAF to outnumber the LTTE. The GSL political leadership determined the overall strategy for the war while commanders fought and won battles.¹⁰² This was the sixth political factor that led to victory. Mounting casualties in the battle with the LTTE was another significant variable. President Rajapaksa was “determined to absorb the political pressure generated by battlefield casualties.”¹⁰³ This was the seventh factor. In previous conflicts with the LTTE, India intervened in Sri Lankan affairs and proved an obstacle to final victory against the LTTE because of pressure from the Indian Tamil population. To handle bilateral relations with India, President Rajapaksa undertook the task “to keep New Delhi aligned to Colombo's military objectives in its battle with the LTTE.”¹⁰⁴ This being the eighth factor. The ninth political objective involved normalizing government operations in spite of the ongoing conflict. To this end, President Rajapaksa ordered “good governance” and “development activities” to win the sustained political support of the people. The tenth and final political factor involved the expansion of the GSL. To create political stability, President Rajapaksa invited coalition parties into his government, thereby creating the largest and broadest political alliance in Sri Lankan history. These ten factors combined, allowed the GSL to finally defeat the LTTE.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

Another article from the Sri Lanka Defense Ministry Website outlined the naval strategy to defeat the LTTE Navy. The online article published an interview with the Chief of the SLN, Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda. In the interview, Admiral Karannagoda lauded the “unwavering leadership of the President” for the GSL victory.¹⁰⁵ He explained the SLN strategy to cut the logistics support of the LTTE and the implementation of SLN strategy to neutralize the suicide tactics of the Sea Tigers.¹⁰⁶ He also acknowledged the importance of cooperation and sharing of intelligence information with other countries, to counteract the international nature of LTTE operations.¹⁰⁷

Another online article from a Southeast Asian regional think tank analyzed the defeat of the LTTE and came up with three different causes for the defeat. The author of the report, Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, is a Sri Lankan Sinhalese expert in counterterrorism. The report, written under the aegis of The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, a think tank in Singapore, is titled, *Inability to sustain luxurious life style caused LTTE's fall*. In the report, Dr. Gunaratna identified three distinct causes for the LTTE defeat. The first cause was the defection of Colonel Karuna, the de facto LTTE leader in Eastern Sri Lanka in 2004.¹⁰⁸ The LTTE primarily conscripted Tamil fighters

¹⁰⁵Ministry of Defense Sri Lanka “President's Leadership Pivotal Factor for War Victory-Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda,” http://www.defence.lk/PrintPage.asp?fname=20100110_04 (accessed April 30, 2011).

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Rohan Gunaratna, “Inability to Sustain Luxurious Life Style caused LTTE's Fall,” The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, <http://www.pvtr.org/pdf/ICPVTRinNews/InabilityToSustainLuxuriousLifeStyle.pdf> (accessed April 30, 2011).

and received food supplies from the eastern sector.¹⁰⁹ The second reason was the destruction of the LTTE supply ships by the SLN in 2006 and 2007.¹¹⁰ The LTTE supply ships transported illicit cargo to LTTE controlled territory. The third factor was the leadership of Defense Minister Gotabaya Rajapaksa who instituted the strategy of fighting in multiple fronts.¹¹¹

One crucial online item used was an interview with Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan, alias Colonel Karuna Amman. Colonel Karuna Amman was the former LTTE Commander of the Eastern Region, a former associate of LTTE Chief Prabhakaran over 20 years, a former Minister of National Integration and Reconciliation, and presently a leading member of the Sri Lankan Freedom Party. In the interview with India's News X television channel in May 2009, Colonel Karuna, then serving as Minister of National Integration and Reconciliation, described his early career in the LTTE, his training in India, and the assistance of the Indian government to the LTTE cause.¹¹² Colonel Karuna gave useful insights on the defeat of the LTTE including tactics in conventional and unconventional tactics.¹¹³ Finally, Colonel Karuna revealed his policy disagreements with LTTE's Chief Prabhakaran, his defection from the LTTE, and his forecasts for the

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²You Tube, *NewsX Video: Interview with Col. Karuna Amman Part-2*, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BC47LzzAKBo> (accessed May 24, 2011).

¹¹³You Tube, *NewsX Video: Interview with Col. Karuna Amman Part-3*. 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWVGZgynKpI> (accessed May 24, 2011).

future.¹¹⁴ The interview provided key insights on the initial success and final defeat of the LTTE.

¹¹⁴You Tube, *NewsX Video: Interview with Col. Karuna Amman Part-4. 2009*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZTtX1fy1TE&feature=relmfu> (accessed May 24, 2011).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 shows the research techniques used to answer the primary question and the secondary questions. Since the questions are historical in nature, the majority of the research conducted is based on records, reports, and documentation from two specific time periods. The two time periods used in the study are from 1983 to 2004 and 2005 to 2009. The rationale for a historical method is to provide an accurate and balanced analysis of how the SLA finally overcame the LTTE insurgency. In addition, comprehensive reports from think tanks such as RAND and CSIS are generally considered accurate analysis of the conflict. In using qualitative analysis, the research relies on the authority, credibility, relevance, and reliability of the organizations and authors producing the reports on the conflict.

Primary Research Method

In order to determine the cause of the GSL victory in 2009, the researcher compared the strategies used by the GSL from 1983 to 2004 and from 2005 to 2009. The period from 1983 to 2004 covered the conflicts known as Eelam War I, Eelam War II, and Eelam War III. The period from 2005 to 2009 covered the conflict known as Eelam War IV. The analysis used the *US Government Counterinsurgency Guide* published in 2009 to determine the instructive lessons of the GSL strategy from the two time periods.

Primary sources selected, include the work of author Sinharaja Tammita-Delgoda who observed and described events in Eelam War IV from the GSL perspective. Another primary source came from an extensive online interview provided by Colonel Karuna

Amman, the former Commander of the LTTE forces in Eastern Sri Lanka and presently the Vice-President of the Sri Lankan Freedom Party. Colonel Karuna Amman provided insights on the strategy and tactics of the LTTE against Indian forces and the SLAF. In the interview, Colonel Karuna described strategies ranging from Cuban guerilla tactics to conventional army operations.

As secondary sources, the books by M. R. Narayan Swamy, were especially selected. Mr. Swamy is a renowned authority on the conflict in Sri Lanka. As a journalist with more than 25 years of experience, he documented the conflict with unbiased coverage. He provided valuable insights from both the GSL and the LTTE perspective. Through his insights on the conflict, he drew his conclusion on what finally caused the downfall of the LTTE and the subsequent victory of the GSL. Another useful secondary source is the timeline on the Sri Lanka conflict. The book titled, *LTTE: Webster's Timeline History*, usefully documented key events during the tumultuous period in Sri Lanka. As a reference tool, *Webster's Timeline History*, made it easier for the researcher to slice the timeline through key and significant political and military events in Sri Lanka's history. Another Category 2 source used was Major Niel Smith's article on "Understanding the Defeat of the Tamil Tigers." This article, in the *Joint Forces Quarterly*, highlighted the use of enemy-centric strategy using the Rajapaksa Model. The researcher used the *US Government Counterinsurgency Guide* published in 2009 to determine the validity and the effectiveness of the enemy-centric Rajapaksa COIN Model. Finally, the online GSL official sources and other online websites analyzing the conflict in Sri Lanka were used extensively to draw out the key points of the GSL victory

against the LTTE. Online websites were used because of the usefulness of diverse points of view on the conflict.

Research Planned But Data Not Available

The researcher contacted the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence and the Presidential office by official government email and private email to officially query the GSL on the strategies used to defeat the LTTE. No official response was given. Subsequent emails to the official website suggested that the message was not received because of a full mail server. If official data had been provided by the GSL in response to the query, the data would have been used as a primary source for analysis. However, the extensive methodology allowed the researcher to take into account many perspectives for analysis. The following chapter will analyze the available data to determine the cause of the GSL victory in Eelam War IV.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Political 1983 to 2004

In the early years of the conflict, the GSL's top political leadership had difficulty in formulating a coherent policy of dealing with the LTTE insurgency. The ineffective effort of the GSL political leadership in peacemaking with the LTTE is in contrast to the determined efforts by the LTTE leadership to further its insurgency. Often, the GSL acceded to some of the LTTE and external demands and pursued a policy of engagement and negotiations. In Eelam War I and II, the GSL was pressured by the Indian government into negotiating with the LTTE. In Eelam War III, the GSL negotiated with the LTTE for a cessation of hostilities. Where the GSL tried negotiations, the LTTE leadership pursued a policy of confrontation that resulted in an increase of violence. For example in 1993, the LTTE attacked the top leadership of the GSL. The female suicide bomber from the Black Tiger wing of the LTTE killed the GSL Prime Minister, Ranasinghe Premadasa. A few years later in 1999, another LTTE suicide bomber wounded GSL President Chadrika Kumaratunga. Prior to the Rajapaksa era in 2005, the political leadership of the GSL appeared incapable of breaking the LTTE stranglehold on the country.

Political 2005 to 2009

In 2005, the newly elected leader of Sri Lanka, President Mahindra Rajapaksa swore to end the long running LTTE insurgency. He unified the top echelons of the GSL directly under his control in order to empower the executive branch of the government.

President Rajapaksa also assumed the portfolio of the Minister of Finance. The President placed close family members in key positions. He positioned his brother, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, as his Defense Secretary to oversee the war against the LTTE. Another brother, Basil Rajapaksa served as party strategist, parliamentarian, and speaker with key decision makers in the Indian Executive Branch. As previously mentioned in the literature review, one of the key points of the enemy-centric Rajapaksa COIN Model is to keep your neighbors in the loop. Basil Rajapaksa played the role of the trusted messenger of the GSL leadership to the political leadership of the Indian Government. The Indian leadership believed that Basil Rajapaksa spoke on behalf of President Rajapaksa. President Rajapaksa solidified his control of the executive branch of the government. Unlike his predecessors, Kumaratunga and Ranil Wickremasinghe, President Rajapaksa's strong hold of the government allowed him to rule until today.

Sri Lankan Military 1983 to 2004

Before the Rajapaksa era, the LTTE skillfully foiled most SLA operations. As previously discussed in the political analysis, the use of the political card by the LTTE or its adherents in the Indian government, left the SLA no choice but to cease military operations. Although the SLA was victorious in several battles against the LTTE, political and manpower considerations played a major role in the stalemate that ensued in the aftermath of Eelam War I, II, and III. In Eelam War I, political considerations outweighed military objectives. For example, the SLA had the LTTE surrounded in Northern Sri Lanka, but politics played a part in allowing the LTTE to survive the SLA

onslaught.¹¹⁵ In Eelam War I, the Indian government faced domestic pressure from Tamil constituents in India who were sympathetic to the LTTE cause.¹¹⁶ Pressured by the Indian electorate, a responsive Indian government demanded the GSL to stop military operations against the LTTE. The GSL yielded to the Indian government demands and ceased military operations against the LTTE.¹¹⁷ The weak GSL political leadership was bullied into submission by threats from the Indian government. GSL victory was postponed for another two decades.

In the intervening period between Eelam War I and Eelam War II, the LTTE rearmed and retrained. The LTTE was the quintessential adaptive and thinking adversary. During this period the LTTE demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency in both conventional and unconventional warfare. Eelam War II, and Eelam War III found the LTTE ready for the conventional warfare. The LTTE effectively engaged the SLA on the battlefield. In a conventional mode, the LTTE mounted operations using multiple battalions.¹¹⁸ In one battle, such as the First Battle at Elephant Pass in 1991, the LTTE employed thousands of its cadres in conventional formations and attacked SLA positions at Elephant Pass, the vital entrance to the Jaffna Peninsula. The LTTE attack failed. In 2001, at the Second Battle of Elephant Pass, the LTTE adapted a multipronged assault and seized control of Elephant Pass from the SLA. The LTTE also proved adept at unconventional warfare. In this vein, the LTTE used standard insurgency techniques such

¹¹⁵Books LLC. *Military History of Sri Lanka*, 36.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸Rabasa et al., 71.

as “hit-and-run attacks.”¹¹⁹ Finally, the LTTE mastered the art of terrorism to great effect. Strategic targets included political leaders, military commanders, military bases, and economic infrastructure. Successful suicide operations by the LTTE cadres included the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President Ranasighe Premadasa, the destruction of the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defense Joint Operations Center, and the sinking of the SLN warships *Suraya* and *Ranasuru*.¹²⁰ These spectacular and headline grabbing demonstrations of economy of force suicide attacks, made the LTTE one of the most notable terrorist organizations in the world.

The LTTE proved a match for the SLAF prior to the Rajapaksa era. In essence, the SLA leadership and soldiers were clearly matched by the LTTE. In fact, the desertion rate in the SLA was pegged at 20,000 soldiers in 2000.¹²¹ In contrast to the SLA, the LTTE practiced meritocracy. Its cadre was experienced, dedicated, and well trained in both conventional and unconventional warfare.¹²² According to Colonel Karuna Amman, the former LTTE Commander of the Eastern Province, the Indians provided tough military training for him and his LTTE cadres in India.¹²³ Colonel Karuna transitioned the LTTE into a conventional force while LTTE Chief Prabhakaran formulated the idea of

¹¹⁹Ibid., 71.

¹²⁰Ibid., 74.

¹²¹Alastair Lawson, “Sri Lanka Crackdown on Deserters,” 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/835808.stm (accessed May 28, 2011).

¹²²Ibid. 72.

¹²³YouTube, *NewsX Video: Part-3*.

suicide bombing.¹²⁴ In several major battles prior to the 2005, LTTE conventional forces defeated the SLA in major battles like the 1996 Battle of Mullaitivu.¹²⁵ The training and commitment of LTTE cadres were exceptional and legendary. The LTTE was the only terrorist organization credited with killing two world leaders like Rajiv Gandhi of India and Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa of the GSL. Motivated LTTE Black Tiger suicide commandos mounted complex suicide operations and successfully attacked the Sri Lankan Central Bank killing 90 and inflicting over 1000 injuries, the Sri Lankan World Trade Center, and the holy Buddhist Shrine of the Temple of the Tooth.¹²⁶ Strategically, the SLA operated as a conventional Army. The SLA lacked enough manpower in Eelam War I and II to mount major operations against the LTTE (see figure 2). Accordingly, the SLA emphasized holding key terrain features and massed forces along standard defensive lines.¹²⁷ The SLA strategy left security gaps in many areas because it did not have enough personnel. The LTTE took advantage and attacked static SLA positions. From 1983 to 2004, the SLA suffered high casualties numbering in the thousands as a result of the LTTE conventional and unconventional tactics. Unofficial figures estimated 5500 of the SLA killed from 2000 to 2005.¹²⁸ Casualties before that time period are unavailable. In Operation Unceasing Waves I, II, and III, the LTTE

¹²⁴YouTube, *NewsX Video: Part-3*, 2009.

¹²⁵Books LLC. *Military History of Sri Lanka*, 42.

¹²⁶Parker, *LTTE: Webster's Timeline History 1924-2007*, 9.

¹²⁷Rabasa et al., 71.

¹²⁸South Asian Terrorism Portal. "Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Sri Lanka since March 2000," http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/database/annual_casualties.htm (accessed June 3, 2011).

launched conventional attacks against static SLA positions. Thousands of LTTE cadres, supported by suicide commandos, captured and held strategic territory from the GSL (see figure 1).

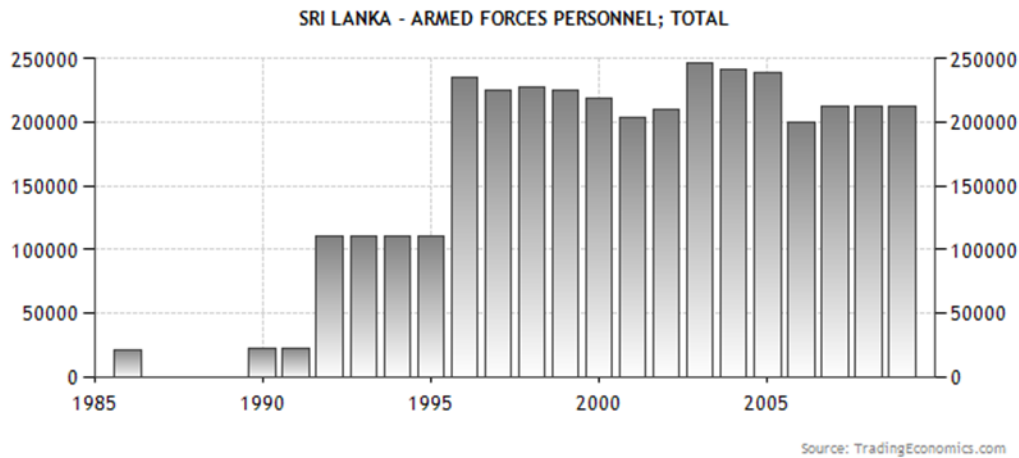


Figure 2. Sri Lankan Armed Forces

Source: Trading Economics. Armed Forces Personnel; Total in Sri Lanka, 2009, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/sri-lanka/armed-forces-personnel-total-wb-data.html> (accessed 28 May 2011).

In unconventional warfare, the LTTE mastered suicide operations. Imaginative use of suicide operations resulted in over 200 strikes against a variety of political, economic, and military targets since 1987.¹²⁹ As a learning organization, the LTTE made use of innovative ideas originated internally and borrowed from abroad. Suicide missions featured disguised female suicide bombers with explosive belts, motorbike bombs, bicycle bombs, truck bombs, suicide naval craft, and suicide commandos. The suicide attacks were sometimes strategic in nature as in the case of the attack on Indian Prime Minister Gandhi or tactical in nature, as in a naval suicide craft attack against an SLN

¹²⁹Ibid., 73.

vessel. In its defense, the SLAF tried unconventional warfare. A special unit, the Long Range Reconnaissance Group, was created to deal with the insurgency, but it was later disbanded for political reasons.¹³⁰ The stalemate after Eelam War I, II, and III, demonstrated that the political leadership and SLA lacked a decisive strategy to win the conflict against the LTTE. Based on the action of the GSL during Eelam War I, II, and III, including surrendering to Indian pressure and the use of third parties like the Norwegians as interlocutors, it appeared that the GSL wanted a negotiated solution instead of a permanent military solution to conflict. However, this strategy failed. The LTTE clearly held the initiative by simply holding on to their occupied territory. The LTTE was in no mood for negotiations. The conflict between the GSL and the LTTE would take a different turn with the election of President Rajapaksa in 2005.

Sri Lankan Military 2005 to 2009

The SLAF strategy against the LTTE changed significantly after the election of President Rajapaksa. The GSL prepared for a sustained and ruthless campaign to end the LTTE insurgency. The beginning of Eelam War IV was marked by a new GSL enemy-centric strategy known as the Rajapaksa Model in some circles. Elements of the model were initially described in the literature review in Major Niels Smith article in the periodical, *Joint Forces Quarterly*. The newly elected government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa instituted a new leadership for the Ministry of Defense with the appointment of his brother, Gotabaya Rajapaksa as Minister of Defense. The appointment of Gotabaya Rajapaksa as Minister of Defense ensured that the policies of the President Rajapaksa

¹³⁰Ibid., 71.

were clearly articulated to the Ministry of Defense and the SLAF. A retired officer, Gotabaya Rajapaksa had experience in battling the LTTE during his service with the SLAF retiring at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. More importantly, unity of effort was ensured at the highest levels of government with Gotabaya Rajapaksa as Minister of Defense and Mahinda Rajapaksa as President. Assisting Gotabaya Rajapaksa in the task of defeating the LTTE was the experienced Commander of the SLA, General Sarath Fonseka. Together, both men pledged to “eliminate the LTTE.”¹³¹ The GSL political and military leaders were united in the effort to end the LTTE insurgency. Familial ties ensured that Gotabaya Rajapaksa faithfully carried out President Rajapaksa’s policies. General Fonseka, severely wounded by a LTTE suicide bomber attack in 2006, was equally keen on ending the insurgency. The GSL also instituted reforms within the SLAF. These reforms included the promotion of battle tested and brave commanders. For example, Brigadier General Prasana de Silva, a Special Forces Commander and veteran of several battles with the LTTE, commanded the 55th Division. Brigadier Shavendra Silva, another battle hardened veteran in previous campaigns against the LTTE, led the 58th Division and General Fonseka was designated as the overall battlefield commander. Political connections and seniority now gave way to meritocracy. Other reforms included new training for COIN and operational planning. In 2002, General Fonseka laid the groundwork for a new training doctrine which emphasized small unit tactics in the form of eight man teams called Special Infantry Operations Teams which were tasked with

¹³¹V. K. Shashikumar, “Lessons from the War in Sri Lanka,” *Indian Defense Review*, 2009, www.indiandefencereview.com/2009/10/lessons-from-the-war-in-sri-lanka.html (accessed May 28, 2011).

COIN operations behind LTTE lines, as well as training regular infantry formations.¹³² These Special Infantry Operations Teams, along with other specially trained units, operated with great success against the LTTE. For example, the LTTE Sea Tigers Deputy Chief, Cheliyan, was killed by Special Forces Units operating behind LTTE lines in 2008.¹³³ Other tactics adopted by the SLA included attacking from multiple fronts (See figure 3). With more available personnel, including personnel assigned by SLN and SAF to support the SLA effort, the SLA adopted a new strategy of attacking along different axes, leaving the LTTE no chance of regrouping to a safe area. The SLAF approached from the North, West, and South, as a result of this strategy, the SLAF cornered the LTTE at the Mullaittivu pocket. SLN vessels deployed along the Northeast coast prevented the LTTE escape by sea. The SLAF trapped and annihilated the LTTE in May 2009 at Mullaittivu.

¹³²Sergie De Silva-Ranasighe, “Strategic Analysis of Sri Lanka’s Counter-Insurgency,” Future Directions International (West Perth, Australia Future Directions International Pty Ltd, 2010), 1.

¹³³Ruwan Weerakoon, *Cheliyan–Deputy Sea Tiger Leader killed*, 2008, <http://www.asiantribune.com/?q=node/13659> (accessed May 28, 2011).



Figure 3. Sri Lanka Armed Forces Offensive Progress Map

Source: Sri Lanka Ministry of Defense, *Battle Progress Map*, 2009, <http://www.defence.lk/orbat/Default.asp> (accessed May 28, 2011).

In addition to training, the GSL increased economic resources for the inevitable showdown against the LTTE. To support the final push against the LTTE, the GSL significantly increased defense spending from 2005 to 2009. The figures (see figure 4) show the increase in defense expenditures in local currency units.

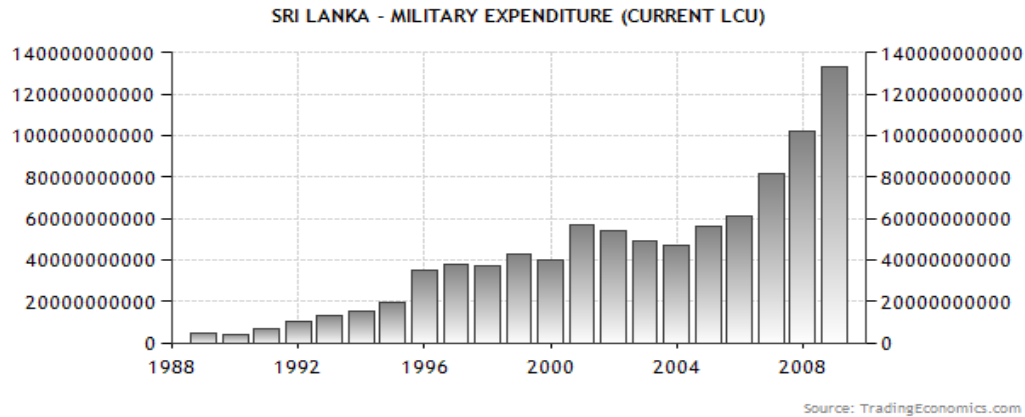


Figure 4. Sri Lankan Military Expenditures

Source: Trading Economics, *Military expenditure (current LCU) in Sri Lanka*, 2009, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/sri-lanka/military-expenditure-current-lcu-wb-data.html> (accessed May 22, 2011).

From 2006 to 2008, additional recruitment of military personnel resulted in an increase in the number of the SLAF by 70,000 new troops and 40,000 civil guards.¹³⁴ The SLAF also received substantial increase in military weapons and equipment from new partners like China and Pakistan. The alleged controversial and harsh SLAF COIN methods, such as massacres, tortures, mass arrests, rapes, artillery and air strikes against Tamil civilians, resulted in friction with its traditional partners in the West. As a result, the GSL turned to China for military and economic assistance. China's partnership with the GSL proved fruitful. China provided over one billion dollars in economic and military aid to Sri Lanka in return for Chinese development projects within Sri Lanka.¹³⁵ China's

¹³⁴Shayana Jayasekara, "How the LTTE was Destroyed," Asian Conflicts Report (Alexandria, VA: SFRD, Institute for Defense Analysis, 2009), 4.

¹³⁵Jeremy Page, "Chinese billions in Sri Lanka fund battle against Tamil Tigers," *The Sunday Times*, May 2, 2009, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6207487.ece> (accessed June 7, 2011).

military equipment exports came in the form of fighter aircraft, artillery systems, armored personnel carriers, advanced anti-tank rockets, and various munitions.¹³⁶ In a departure from past years, the SLAF possessed equipment which allowed for engagement of LTTE ground, hardened underground facilities, air, and naval targets. China also actively supported Pakistani involvement in Sri Lanka. Pakistan did not disappoint. Chinese and Pakistani pilots reportedly taught SAF pilots and actively participated in planning air operations against a variety of LTTE targets.¹³⁷ In addition, China provided diplomatic cover for Sri Lanka when charges of human rights abuses arose in the UN.¹³⁸ China's logistical, training, and diplomatic support for the GSL proved to be decisive points in the conflict. It should be noted that Sri Lanka turned to China as a major weapons supplier only as a last resort. China naturally filled the vacuum left by the West and India. China's actions in Sri Lanka are consistent with its actions in other parts of the world. For the right price, China provided much needed assistance without regard for humanitarian consequences. Also worth noting is the fact that other countries with ongoing internal threats, like China, Pakistan, and India, supported Sri Lanka's right to pursue its internal policies. On May 27, 2009, the UN Human Rights Council passed resolution *S-11/1 Assistance to Sri Lanka in the promotion and protection of human rights*. In the final vote for resolution *S-11/1*, 29 nations supported and congratulated Sri Lanka on its victory against terrorism. There were 12 Western countries which opposed the resolution while six countries abstained from the vote. The final UN Human Rights Council

¹³⁶Vijay Sakhuja, 9.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 9.

¹³⁸Page, "Chinese billions in Sri Lanka fund battle against Tamil Tigers."

resolution affirmed “the respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Sri Lanka and its sovereign rights to protect its citizens and to combat terrorism.”¹³⁹

Given a free hand to deal with the LTTE, the SLAF carried out the enemy-centric Rajapaksa Model for COIN with ever increasing vigor. The enemy-centric Rajapaksa Model highlights eight key points: (1) political will, (2) go to hell (eliminate and annihilate), (3) no negotiations with the insurgents, (4) regulate media, (5) no ceasefire, (6) complete operational freedom, (7) accent of young commanders, and (8) keep your neighbors in the loop. The SLAF had complete operational freedom as outlined in the Rajapaksa Model. Operational freedom meant that military operations took precedence over humanitarian considerations. Allegations of torture, rape, and other human rights violations were prevalent. The GSL rejected Western protests about SLAF human rights violations. The GSL considered Western protests as interference in Sri Lanka’s internal affairs. The GSL argued that SLAF actions were within the confines on the war on terrorism. The rejection of alleged SLAF human rights violations by the GSL was in line with the Rajapaksa Model’s “go to hell” principle. Many civilians suffered as a result of the conflict between the SLAF and the LTTE. The International Committee of the Red Cross estimates gave the number of internally displaced persons at 300,000 and approximately 34,000 detainees at the conclusion of the fighting.¹⁴⁰ Although the number

¹³⁹Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, The human rights situation in Sri Lanka,” 11th special session of the Human Rights Council, Tuesday 26 and 27 May 2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/specialsession/11/index.htm> (accessed May 22, 2011).

¹⁴⁰International Committee of the Red Cross Report 2009.

of civilian casualties numbered in the thousands, the approval rating of the GSL remained high after it delivered a much needed victory to a war weary Sri Lankan population.

The GSL also adopted a policy of no negotiations with LTTE terrorists. The GSL policy was consistent with Western policies of not negotiating with terrorist groups. The no negotiations policy pursued by the GSL effectively closed the avenue for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. More importantly, the no negotiations policy deprived the LTTE the chance of regrouping and rearming for a future conflict. The CFAs between the GSL and the LTTE at the conclusion of Eelam War I, Eelam War II, and Eelam War III gave the LTTE the opportunity to purchase arms and equipment to resume the conflict at a later date.

Consistent with the Rajapaksa Model principle of regulating the media, the GSL effectively controlled media access to the conflict. The GSL curtailed press freedoms through government regulations such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act. In 2008, International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Sri Lanka published a report which detailed the difficulty of reporting in the conflict areas. The report noted the “almost total blackout of independent information from the conflict areas of the country.”¹⁴¹ Security for journalists reporting on the conflict declined. The report detailed at least six journalists were killed and two journalists were missing.¹⁴² The effectiveness

¹⁴¹International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Sri Lanka. *Media under fire: Press freedom lockdown in Sri Lanka* (Paris: Reporters without Borders, 2008), 8.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 13-15.

of GSL control of media reporting and the persistent lack of security for journalists earned Sri Lanka the rank of 162 at the bottom of the 2009 Press Freedom Index.¹⁴³

In contrast, the GSL's political leadership gave SLAF Field Commanders operational freedom. Under the arrangement with the field commanders, the political leadership accepted that possibility of a large number of Tamil civilian and SLAF casualties. Operational freedom gave SLAF Field Commanders leeway in the employment of area weapons such as artillery and bombs in areas populated by LTTE cadres and civilians. The unrelenting SLAF offensive succeeded at the cost of approximately 6,000 SLAF personnel killed and 30,000 wounded.¹⁴⁴ On the opposing side, 22,000 LTTE militants were killed.¹⁴⁵ The Tamil civilian casualties in the area of operations are undetermined at this point, but the numbers are estimated to be in the thousands. The Rajapaksa concept of accenting young commanders does not specifically endorse the idea that senior officers were incapable of leading. On the contrary, this concept rewarded capable officers who succeeded in their mission. For example, the GSL chose General Fonseka to lead the offensive against the LTTE. Finally the concept of keeping neighbors in the loop was of the utmost importance. The LTTE operated in various countries. The Gotabaya brothers undertook the task of keeping regional neighbors informed of developments in Sri Lanka. The GSL keenly cooperated with

¹⁴³Asian Human Rights Commission, "Sri Lanka: World Press Freedom Ranking," 2009, <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/forwarded-news/AHRC-FST-074-2009> (accessed May 28, 2011).

¹⁴⁴The Financial Times, "Sri Lanka Army Toll Shows Scale of War," 2009, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/cd87f930-46f0-11de-923e-00144feabdc0.html> (access May 28, 2011).

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*

regional powers like India, China, and Pakistan. The task of keeping Sri Lanka's neighbors informed fell mainly to President Rajapaksa's brother, Basil. Regional powers were assured that Basil Rajapaksa spoke for the GSL leadership. Multilateral cooperation with key partners was a key concept in defeating the LTTE. One such example is the arrest of the LTTE's Chief Financier, (a.k.a. KP), who was tracked and arrested in Malaysia and subsequently repatriated to Sri Lanka.

The GSL primarily used the enemy-centric Rajapaksa Model to defeat the LTTE. Population-centric COIN was also used, but to a much lesser extent. An enemy-centric approach was applicable to the LTTE because the organization had centralized control. Prabhakaran was the Tamil paramount leader. He held supreme military and political power in the LTTE. According to the *US Government Counterinsurgency Guide* published in January 2009, successful COIN is defined if three requirements are met. The first requirement stipulated that "the affected government is seen as legitimate, controlling social, political, economic and security institutions that meet the population's needs, including adequate mechanisms to address the grievances that may have fueled support of the insurgency."¹⁴⁶ Second, "the insurgent movements and their leaders are co-opted, marginalized, or separated from the population."¹⁴⁷ Third, "armed insurgent forces have dissolved or been demobilized, and/or reintegrated into the political, economic, and social structures of the country."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶US Department of State, *US Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, 16.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

The GSL's strategy of negotiated settlement with the LTTE in Eelam War I, II, and III clearly did not meet the measure of effectiveness in COIN. First, the GSL did not control all government institutions in Sri Lanka because the LTTE had a parallel de facto government in Northeastern Sri Lanka. Second, the LTTE political and military leaders were not marginalized, co-opted or separated from the population. In fact, the LTTE had a substantial following in their area of operations and enjoyed the support of the Tamil Diaspora. Third, the LTTE was neither demobilized nor reintegrated into society. In fact, they were armed and soon resumed hostilities.

The enemy-centric Rajapaksa COIN Model met all three requirements for COIN success as they are stated in the U.S. Government COIN Guide. In 2010, the majority of the voters in Sri Lanka validated the legitimacy of the GSL with an overwhelming vote for President Rajapaksa. With the military defeat of the LTTE in 2009, the GSL had undisputed control of all GSL institutions and the territory encompassing Sri Lanka. All senior LTTE leaders, including LTTE Chief Prabhakaran and the majority of the LTTE cadres, were permanently separated from the population when the SLAF killed them in 2009. The GSL detained surviving LTTE cadres with thousands of displaced Tamil civilians for reintegration. The process of reintegrating thousands of Tamil civilians and demobilized LTTE cadres continue to this day. Former LTTE combatants, like the last LTTE Eastern Province Commander Colonel Karuna, joined the political process because of political and military policy disagreements with LTTE Chief Prabhakaran. In 2009, President Rajapaksa appointed Colonel Karuna as Minister of National Reintegration and Reconciliation.

The *US Counterinsurgency Guide* also stated that approaches to COIN are not purely enemy-centric or population-centric.¹⁴⁹ In Sri Lanka's case from 2005 to 2009, the GSL predominantly relied on an enemy-centric approach. However, during that same period, the GSL also initiated whole of government and whole of society population-centric approach. For example, the GSL enlarged the government cabinet ministries to accommodate the interests of parties that represented a broad section Sri Lankan society. As described in the literature review, the GSL, in partnership with regional allies, initiated large scale infrastructure development and economic aid programs that met the needs of the people. The infrastructure programs, like the Chinese funded billion dollar port development and power systems projects, increased the legitimacy of the government.¹⁵⁰

Economic Sanctions 1983 to 2004

The LTTE received its funding and logistical support through the large Tamil Diaspora community spread across North America, Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and South Asia. The LTTE controlled the Diaspora community through cadres embedded within the Diaspora community itself. The LTTE developed a unique and complex financial network. U.S. government agencies confirmed that LTTE operatives raised an estimated 200 million dollars per year abroad through formal and informal *undiyal* transnational money transfer networks and they subsequently procured

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 15.

¹⁵⁰Vijay Sakhuja, *Sri Lanka: Beijing's Growing Foothold in the Indian Ocean*, 9.

armaments wherever they were available.¹⁵¹ In this arena, the international community made attempts in the early 1990s to clamp down on the LTTE's finances. For example, the U.S. declared the LTTE a FTO in 1997.¹⁵² This declaration made the Tamil Diaspora community in the U.S. hesitant to contribute to the LTTE cause. The disjointed efforts to cut off financial assistance to the LTTE proved inadequate as some countries with large Tamil Diaspora communities were hesitant to follow suit. After all, Tamil Diaspora communities held substantial political clout. Countries with sizeable Tamil populations were hesitant to alienate groups like the Tamils. The funds continued to flow from Tamil Diaspora communities in countries where their struggle was recognized. The GSL also provided information about LTTE financing to other countries with substantial Tamil populations; however, the information provided was typically classified as unreliable and was not acted upon.¹⁵³ During the period prior to 11 September 2001, the economic sanctions against the LTTE were clearly not very effective and remained insignificant.

The events on 11 September 2001 changed the financial dynamics for the LTTE. The 11 September incident forced the international community to recognize the danger posed by fund raising, by terrorist organizations. Many countries, including those that were initially inclined to support the LTTE, slowly enacted new anti-terrorism laws to curb terrorist financing. The Tamil Diaspora in various countries reacted in various ways.

¹⁵¹International Crisis Group, "The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora after the LTTE," *Asia Report* no. 186 (February 23, 2010), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/186-the-sri-lankan-tamil-diaspora-after-the-ltte.aspx> (accessed May 4, 2011), 5-6.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 10.

Unwilling Tamil donors who were previously coerced into supporting the LTTE refused to provide additional funding while more willing Tamil donors became wary of being seen as supporters of a terrorist organization.¹⁵⁴ Funding for LTTE operations became increasingly difficult as countries with large Tamil Diaspora communities declared the LTTE a terrorist organization after 11 September 2001.

Economic Sanctions 2005 to 2009

The economic sanctions that resulted from the LTTE being designated as a FTO were instrumental in the downfall of the LTTE. Major organizational sources of LTTE funding slowly narrowed. The United Kingdom closed a major financial LTTE hub in 2001 and Canada closed a LTTE affiliated non-government organization in 2008.¹⁵⁵ Before his death in the final SLAF offensive, LTTE Chief Prabhakaran admitted that the economic sanctions made it difficult to procure much needed equipment.¹⁵⁶ The LTTE financial system, with over 1582 bank accounts, finally collapsed in August 2009 after the arrest of Selverasa Pathmanathan, the LTTE's Chief Financial Officer.¹⁵⁷ Attempts to reconstitute the LTTE as a viable organization have proven difficult without a financial base. In Sri Lanka's case, the concerted effort by the international community significantly reduced the amount of money available to the fund the LTTE insurgency.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 6.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 7.

Financial sanctions on overseas LTTE money transfer networks proved a key factor in the defeat of the LTTE insurgency.

The Naval Situation 1983 to 2004

The fledgling LTTE Sea Tigers began operations in 1984 by ferrying cadres and supplies from India to Sri Lanka through the Palk Strait that separated the two countries.¹⁵⁸ By 1990, the mature Sea Tigers operated with near impunity. From 1990 to 2000, the SLN sustained significant setbacks in several confrontations against the Sea Tigers. The ever innovative and adaptive Sea Tigers used swarming fast boat and suicide attacks against the more sophisticated and bigger SLN vessels.¹⁵⁹ The Sea Tigers destroyed several SLN vessels in various engagements. A typical Sea Tiger attack pitted one SLN vessel against “15 Sea Tiger craft and another eight to ten suicide craft.”¹⁶⁰ During this time period, the Sea Tigers exhibited daring and innovation and applied insurgency tactics of hit and run attacks, as well as their trademark suicide attacks. In defeat, the SLN learned its lesson and developed new tactics and countermeasures.

The Sri Lankan Navy 2005 to 2009

The SLN played a major part in the defeat of the LTTE by interdicting supplies destined for LTTE cadres operating in Northeastern Sri Lanka. As previously mentioned, the LTTE received its funding through an array of overseas sources. With available funds, LTTE operatives procured weapons and equipment for onward shipment to Sri

¹⁵⁸Fish, 21.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

Lanka. The major issue for the SLN included LTTE naval fleet and LTTE supply ships, also called floating warehouses, which brought armaments to the LTTE controlled areas in the Northeast of Sri Lanka. Ocean going vessels used to resupply the LTTE operated through several ports in the Indian Ocean region.

The vastness of the Indian Ocean made it difficult for the SLN to locate and intercept the ships. Vice Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda, Chief of the SLN, stated that the SLN concentrated on four objectives: securing the sea lines of communication to Colombo, securing the sea lanes around Sri Lanka, ensuring the safety of commercial shipping near LTTE controlled areas, and depriving the LTTE of much needed supplies.¹⁶¹ To accomplish the first three of the four objectives, the SLN developed the “small boat concept” to defeat the LTTE Navy. Under the small boat concept, locally manufactured SLN inshore patrol craft swarmed and overwhelmed LTTE suicide craft through sheer force of numbers, while larger SLN fast attack vessels simultaneously provided fire support.¹⁶² After several decisive naval engagements in Sri Lankan territorial waters off the North and Northeastern coast, the SLN defeated the LTTE Sea Tigers, attained sea control, and secured friendly commercial shipping in the waters surrounding Sri Lanka.

The fourth task, depriving the LTTE of needed supplies, required efforts at the highest levels of the GSL. According to Admiral Karannagoda, tracking and neutralizing

¹⁶¹Ministry of Defense Sri Lanka, “President's Leadership Pivotal Factor for War Victory.”

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

hostile LTTE supply ships and trawlers came as a result of intelligence coordination with cooperating countries, intelligence work by the GSL, and information derived from captured LTTE Sea Tigers.¹⁶³ Acting on credible intelligence, the SLN mounted successful operations in 2006 and 2007 against the LTTE supply ships in waters near Sri Lanka and in waters close to Australian territory (see figure 4). The GSL cooperated with other nations in line with the “keep your neighbors in the loop” principle of the enemy-centric Rajapaksa Model.¹⁶⁴ The destruction of the majority of the LTTE suicide fleet and supply vessels in 2007 had a telling effect on the SLAF land campaign. Having deprived the LTTE of the much needed ammunition and equipment, the SLAF pushed the LTTE from their defensive lines into ever tightening positions. The SLN basically adapted the Sea Tiger swarming method and made some improvements such as adding the fast attack craft as a fire support vessel. The SLN played a direct role in the destruction of the LTTE Sea Tiger Navy and an important supporting role in the ultimate defeat of LTTE organization.

¹⁶³Ibid.

¹⁶⁴Smith, 40.

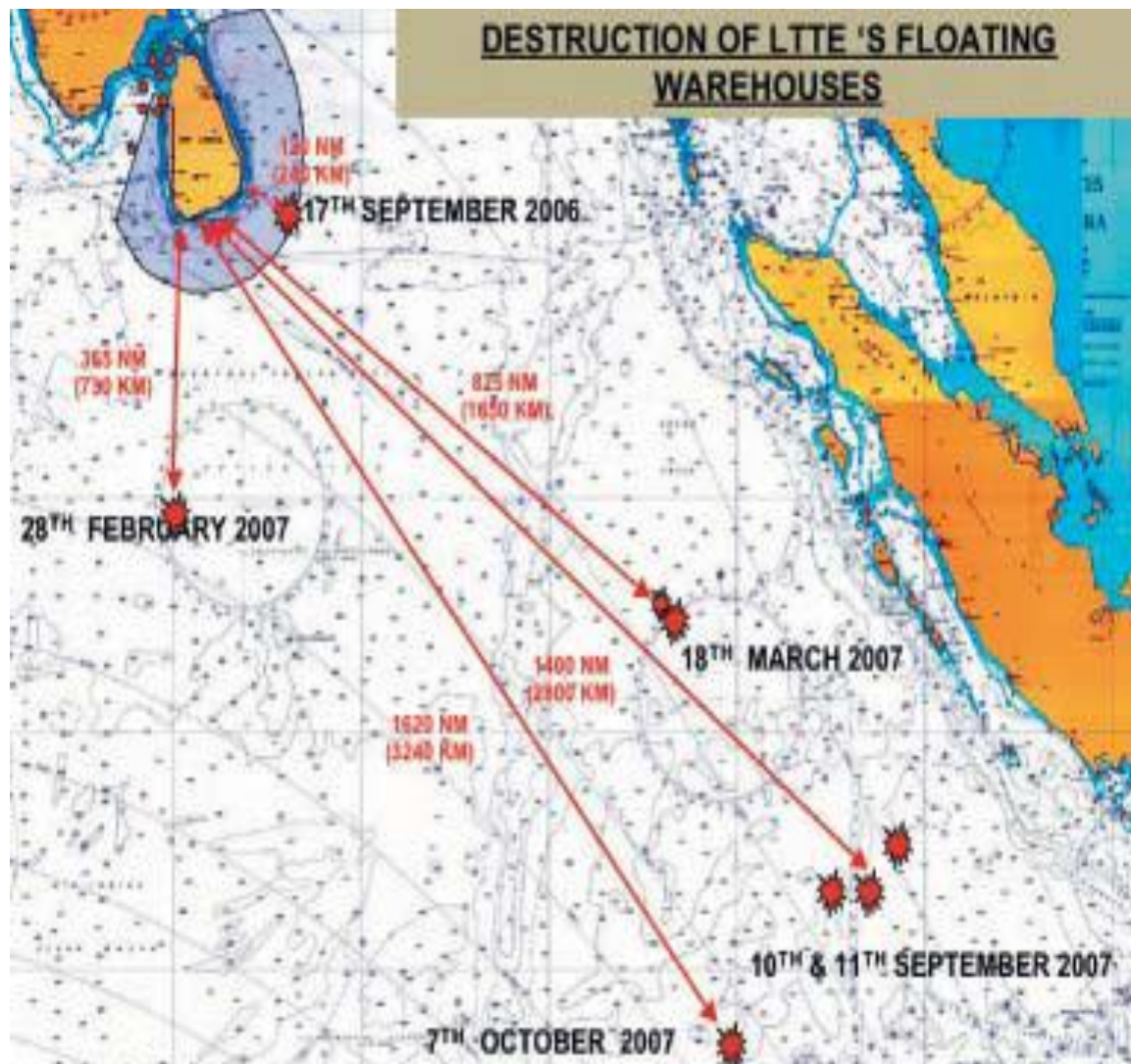


Figure 5. Sri Lankan Navy Naval Action against LTTE Warehouse Vessels

Source: Ministry of Defence Sri Lanka, *Full text of the speech made by Secretary Defence Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa at the inaugural session of the Galle Dialogue Maritime Conferences*, http://www.defence.lk/PrintPage.asp?fname=20100806_12 (accessed May 22, 2011).

Sri Lankan Air Force 1983 to 2004

In the 1990s, the SAF operated mainly to assist the SLA with close air support and search and rescue operations. The LTTE had no significant air assets during that time period, but possessed some man portable air defense systems. The LTTE effectively used the man portable air defense systems and shot down several SAF attack aircraft. The threat posed by the man portable air defense systems made the 1990s the SAF's "darkest hours."¹⁶⁵ In addition to attacks against military targets, the LTTE also conducted terrorist attacks against civilian air targets. The most notable LTTE attack on an aircraft occurred in the 1990s when the LTTE successfully downed a Lion Air civilian flight with the loss of 55 members of the crew and passengers.¹⁶⁶ Although the SAF maintained air superiority during the 1990s, their effectiveness against LTTE targets, air operations did not appear to have significant effect on LTTE operations. The LTTE remained a potent force during the 1990s. The SAF continued to suffer several setbacks in the early 2000s as a result of LTTE ground action against SAF assets and installations. During this period, the SAF faced both a nascent LTTE Air Force and asymmetric threats from the LTTE. On July 24, 2001, LTTE Black Tiger suicide commandos infiltrated the SAF airbase and the international airport in Colombo and destroyed several advanced military aircraft, as well as numerous civilian passenger aircraft. The military toll included, two advanced Israeli Kfir Aircraft, three K-8 Karakorum Trainers, a MIG-27 and two MI-17

¹⁶⁵Warnes, 74.

¹⁶⁶Aviation Safety Network, "Criminal Occurrence Description," <http://aviation-safety.net/database/record.php?id=19980929-0> (accessed April 24, 2011).

Helicopters.¹⁶⁷ The LTTE suicide attack on the airport significantly eroded the capabilities of both the SAF and Sri Lankan Airlines. The Sri Lankan economy which relied partly on tourism was significantly affected by bad publicity generated by the lack of security.¹⁶⁸

Sri Lankan Air Force 2005 to 2009

Several attacks followed later in the decade including another suicide attack by LTTE Black Tigers on an SAF airbase in October 2007.¹⁶⁹ In a daring multimodal attack, LTTE Black Tiger commandos supported by two LTTE Air Tiger light aircraft carrying bombs destroyed several SAF military aircraft at Anuradhapura Airbase. In the successful multimodal attack, the LTTE Air and Black Tigers suicide commandos destroyed four PT-6 aircraft, one K-8 Karakorum, a Beech B200T signals intelligence aircraft, two MI-17 Helicopters, one MI-35P Hind Helicopter, one Bell 206A Helicopter and one Bell 212 Helicopter.¹⁷⁰ The LTTE also mounted conventional air attacks against GSL civilian targets. Using Zlin Z-143 aircraft, LTTE Air Tigers mounted several daring air raids on various targets throughout Sri Lanka including attacks on Colombo in 2009.¹⁷¹ The LTTE air attacks on civilian targets were insignificant and caused little damage. However, the

¹⁶⁷Warnes, 76.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹The New York Times, "Rebel Attack on Airport Shocks Leaders of Sri Lanka," July 25, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/25/world/rebel-attack-on-airport-shocks-leaders-of-sri-lanka.html> (accessed May 19, 2011).

¹⁷⁰Warnes, 76.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 77.

air attacks hurt GSL morale and boosted the morale and propaganda campaign of the LTTE through their apparent ability to sporadically strike targets at will. The SAF acquired replacements. China was willing to assist. In the final offensive that saw the defeat of the LTTE, the SAF finally acquitted itself through vigorous close air support of advancing ground troops and strategic attacks on high value targets. In the analysis of the conflict, it appeared that the SAF played a secondary supporting role in comparison to the primary roles of the SLA and the SLN. The LTTE Air Tigers had no fighter aircraft and limited light bomber capability. In addition, SAF personnel were used as ground units to hold areas taken by SLA ground units.

Sri Lankan Intelligence 1983 to 2004

In the 1980s, India and Sri Lanka had a difficult bilateral relationship. The LTTE received substantial assistance from the Research and Analysis Wing, India's external services intelligence agency. India supported the LTTE because of the large sympathetic Tamil constituency based out of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.¹⁷² LTTE operatives and cadre operated openly in India in Tamil Nadu. Indian military forces also trained the LTTE in methods of insurgency.¹⁷³ Substantial amounts of funding were received from the Tamil community based out of India.¹⁷⁴ Illicit arms and supplies flowed through the narrow Palk Straits. This period was marked by poor intelligence cooperation with its giant neighbor. In addition, most nations did not consider the LTTE as a FTO during the

¹⁷²M. R. Narayan Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind* (Colombo:Yapa Publications, 2008), 89.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 107.

early 1990s. The dawn of the 21st century brought about increased cooperation amongst intelligence agencies from various nations because of the transnational threat posed by the FTOs which included the LTTE.

Sri Lankan Intelligence 2005 to 2009

Sri Lankan cooperation with its giant neighbor, India, proved to be a key factor in the defeat of the LTTE Sea Tiger's. According to the chief of the SLN, Admiral Karrangoda, "a friendly neighbor," meaning India, provided intelligence on the movements of the vessels carrying weapons and supplies for the LTTE in Sri Lanka.¹⁷⁵ In addition, Sri Lanka benefitted from the increased vigilance of other countries in regard to funding of FTO's such as the LTTE. As a result of the increased vigilance by law enforcement authorities, LTTE funding became increasingly difficult. The most successful GSL intelligence coup came in the form of Colonel Karuna and sizable numbers of Tamil fighters from the Eastern district. The defection to the GSL severely damaged the LTTE. Colonel Karuna and his defecting cadres gave the GSL valuable intelligence of LTTE operations.¹⁷⁶ GSL victory would have been impossible if it were not for Colonel Karuna's defection.¹⁷⁷ Colonel Karuna's defection to the GSL and his subsequent affiliation with the political process was an intelligence and propaganda coup for the GSL.

¹⁷⁵Fish, 24.

¹⁷⁶Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, *Strategic Analysis of Sri Lankan Military's Counter-Insurgency Operations*, 3.

¹⁷⁷Rohan Gunaratna, "Demise of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," *Risk Management Solutions, Inc.* August 2009, https://www.rms.com/Publications/RMS_Terrorism_Risk_Briefing_Jan_2009.pdf (accessed May 3, 2011), 1.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An enemy-centric approach to COIN concentrates efforts on defeating an adversary. The Rajapaksa Model is an enemy-centric form of COIN. The use of the enemy-centric Rajapaksa Model for COIN at the latter stages of the long conflict in Sri Lanka is controversial and divisive because of the humanitarian crisis that ensued. However, the research showed that the effectiveness of punitive COIN methods such as the Rajapaksa Model cannot be denied. Under the able leadership of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, the GSL focused political, economic, military, and intelligence efforts primarily through the enemy-centric Rajapaksa COIN Model.

Political-Military

At the onset of the conflict, two groups, the GSL and the LTTE, had two diametrically opposed and competing ideas. Each group was equally determined to bring about their vision for the future. The GSL advocated the idea of a united Sri Lanka. At the other end of the spectrum, the LTTE wanted a separate homeland for the minority Tamil population in the North and East of Sri Lanka. The heat and friction created by the battle of ideas was marked by bloody conflict that lasted for over two decades. During the conflict, several attempts by the international community to broker peace failed. In the four wars fought between the GSL and the LTTE, the LTTE gained and held territory in the North and Eastern areas of Sri Lanka. The LTTE control of portions of Sri Lankan sovereign territory was unacceptable to the GSL. Several GSL governments prior to 2005 tried to alter the facts on the ground without success. In a seminal event that was

ironically brought about by an election boycott by the LTTE, the Sri Lankans elected Mahinda Rajapaksa as President in 2005. Unlike his predecessors, President Rajapaksa had an effective strategy to end the insurgency, through punitive COIN tactics reminiscent of a bygone era. In May 2009, the GSL finally prevailed against the LTTE after a long and bloody offensive, through the application of the enemy-centric Rajapaksa Model. To date, Sri Lanka remains a unitary state and the LTTE is no more. The enemy-centric Rajapaksa COIN Model appeared vindicated. But is it the end of separatism in Sri Lanka? The actions of the GSL in the coming years will likely determine the answer to this question. For now, the Rajapaksa Model stands as a possible solution to COIN albeit its long term success is yet to be determined.

In summary, the end state for the GSL was the territorial integrity of the island of Sri Lanka. Mahinda Rajapaksa was elected to office on the platform of defeating the LTTE which was the way to achieve the end state. The means to this end became known as the Rajapaksa Model. The GSL's use of the Rajapaksa Model appeared as the appropriate model because of its enemy-centric approach against an adversary with centralized control. It could be argued that the GSL and the LTTE struggle had conventional, unconventional, and asymmetric aspects. That may be true, but the GSL framed the fight against the LTTE as COIN. More importantly, the GSL continually highlighted the struggle against the LTTE as a fight and finally as a victory against terrorism. The previous attempts by the GSL at isolation, attrition, negotiations, and CFAs, including through international third parties like Norway, failed over the previous decades. Therefore, the use of the same failed methods in the hope of generating a

different outcome and ending the conflict seemed like a non-starter. In counterterrorism or COIN, hope is not a valid strategy.

Like his predecessors, President Rajapaksa faced the same resolute adversary whose stated goal was a separate homeland in the territory of Sri Lanka. The separatist position of Prabhakaran and the LTTE senior leadership did not change over the intervening years. The position of both parties to the conflict remained. Any change in position would lead to the loss of legitimacy for the side that blinked first. In 2005, Mahinda Rajapaksa's party won the election by the narrow margin of 1 percent. He could not risk failing to deliver on his campaign promise to end the war. On the other hand, the LTTE was in no mood for negotiations or compromise. The fact that the LTTE refused to participate in the 2005 election validates this fact.

It is important to note that Mahinda Rajapaksa is a politician and not a military leader. Therefore, the Rajapaksa Model is basically a political model applied in a military environment. Critics of the Rajapaksa Model argue that population-centric COIN methods were not applied. This assumption is simply wrong. From a political standpoint, Mahinda Rajapaksa protected the population through the use of his model. The population in non-LTTE controlled areas was protected from the LTTE. The final offensive that defeated the LTTE extended the protection of the state to previously ungoverned territories. Consistent with the clear, hold, and build concept in the U.S. COIN theory.

Leadership

History has repeatedly shown that leadership is often a crucial factor that determines the outcome of a conflict. As the leader of the GSL, President Rajapaksa was

keen on delivering a military victory to a war weary nation. Through the Rajapaksa Model, he created the conditions necessary for success. He resolutely stood his ground under intense pressure from Western nations, deftly fostered cooperative alliances with regional powers, and mustered the resources and manpower to end the conflict. Of course, it helped immensely that his closest relatives held the levers of power at the highest levels of government. And more importantly, the SLAF and majority Sinhalese population also shared in the commitment to end the conflict. Military victory was made possible by the efforts and the sacrifice of the SLAF during the final offensive. A grateful majority of the Sri Lankan population validated Mahinda Rajapaksa's hold on office and his strategy for winning and ending the conflict with the LTTE with a resounding election victory in 2010. Incidentally, General Fonseka, the SLAF Commander during the final campaign against the LTTE, decided to run for office after a falling-out with the GSL's political leadership. He came in at a close second in the election.

Lessons to Apply

Many world leaders from countries threatened by secession, terrorism, internal unrest, and external threats, like President Saleh of Yemen and President Khadafy of Libya, internalized the implications of the Rajapaksa Model and drew one definite conclusion. The Rajapaksa Model is an effective model against terrorism and insurgency. This year, the world witnessed elements of the Rajapaksa Model used in Libya, Yemen, and the Sudan. In the Libyan and the Yemeni example, the respective political leaders summoned the political will to maintain the "unity" of the nation or to stay in power. Colonel Khadafy of Libya and President Saleh of Yemen unleashed their Armed Forces on dissidents, journalists, and rebels. Another Sudanese region, Darfur, is still in revolt.

The world will see more use of the Rajapaksa Model in this era of persistent conflict. With the breakup of Sudan fresh in memory, many political leaders know the consequence of failing to maintain territorial integrity. Some political leaders, whether a strongman or an elected leader, will not countenance the breakup of their nation—at least not without a fight. For some political leaders, like Saleh and Khaddafy, fragmentation of their nation would be a betrayal of their oath of office or a betrayal of their revolutionary ideals. Naturally, use of the Rajapaksa Model entails certain risks including condemnation, sanctions, and external interventions as a result of the renewed vigor of the responsibility to protect movement gaining ground in international circles.

Sri Lanka

As the President of the reconstituted nation of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa must transition from a wartime leader to a peacetime leader. He must now be a leader for both the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority. Although the military threat of the LTTE has been removed, the underlying causes that led to the rise of the LTTE must be addressed. If he fails to address the grievances that led to the initial revolt, the simmering resentment of the Tamil population and the Tamil Diaspora will surely give rise to a new rebellion. The Tamil Diaspora that supported the LTTE remains active. Under his leadership, the GSL must ensure that reconstruction, reconciliation, economic development, governance and the rule of law apply through the island nation.

Impacts

The use of an enemy-centric COIN Model like the Rajapaksa Model can have second order effects. The UN report released in April 2011 alleged that both the GSL and

the LTTE were guilty of gross human rights violations. Sanctioning the GSL for human rights violations would be counterproductive at this point. UN action would reopen Sri Lankan wounds that are in the process of healing. The international community must balance its quest for justice and investigations of human rights violations and allow the Sinhalese and the Tamil community to perform the task of reconciliation and rebuilding Sri Lanka at their own pace. For it is better for the Sri Lankans to solve their own internal problems than to have the international community dictate terms based on western values. In addition, sanctioning the GSL would further alienate Sri Lanka. If the GSL had no other options, it will reach out to the Russian and Chinese governments as it has done in the past.

If the researcher had more time, it would continue with questions like:

1. Is the Rajapaksa Model an effective COIN standard for nations with limited resources?
2. In the era of persistent conflict, can the U.S. afford to “subcontract” to other nations the task of fighting insurgencies using enemy-centric COIN tactics?

These questions, if answered through qualitative analysis would establish solid strategies for other countries faced with issues of terrorism.

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