



VAMUN

XXXIX

Sri Lankan Civil War 1983

Chair: Aditya Seth

Crisis Directors: Mohit Srivatsav

A Word from your Chair and Director...

Welcome to the Indian Cabinet on the Sri Lankan Civil War at VAMUN XXXIX. We're really excited to have all of you here and we're looking forward to a riveting committee.

Your Chair Aditya Seth, is a fourth year from Mumbai, India, majoring in Marketing and Information Technology at the McIntire School of Commerce. Aditya has previously been Director General and Charge d' Affaires for our collegiate conference VICS and is currently serving as the President of the International Relations Organization at UVA, the parent organization of VAMUN. Outside the classroom, he is an aviation enthusiast and can also be found exploring fun places to eat in Charlottesville or trekking.

Your CD, Mohit,

Is currently studying
Physics and C.S.

Mohit was at VICS,

He was Crisis Director,
You should be prepared.

Outside of MUN he

Enjoys lots of the stuff he
Wrote on the main page.

We hope to see you are researched and ready to go in November! In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

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प्रधान मंत्री कार्यालय

भारत सरकार

दिल्ली, भारत

1987

My fellow Ministers,

As you may all know, our neighbours to the south have recently become victims of a severe insurgency within their borders. Many Tamil groups in the northern part of Sri Lanka have been fighting for an independent Tamil state. Of late, this fight has turned violent and has been ravaging the rest of the island nation.

Being an important country in the region, I think it is important that we take notice of these events happening in our vicinity and try and understand how they may impact us. In my next cabinet meeting, I would like to discuss how we should deal with this situation at hand. Whether we ignore it, intervene or take any other action. I think this is particularly important as we have a large Tamil population in South India and we would not want any spillover into our borders.

Attached in this Confidential file, you will find a brief from our strategists to prepare you for the journey ahead. Read carefully and think thoroughly. I'm fully confident in your ability to protect our nation, our people, and our democracy.

Regards,

Rajiv Gandhi

Prime Minister of India



**From the Office of
the Prime Minister**

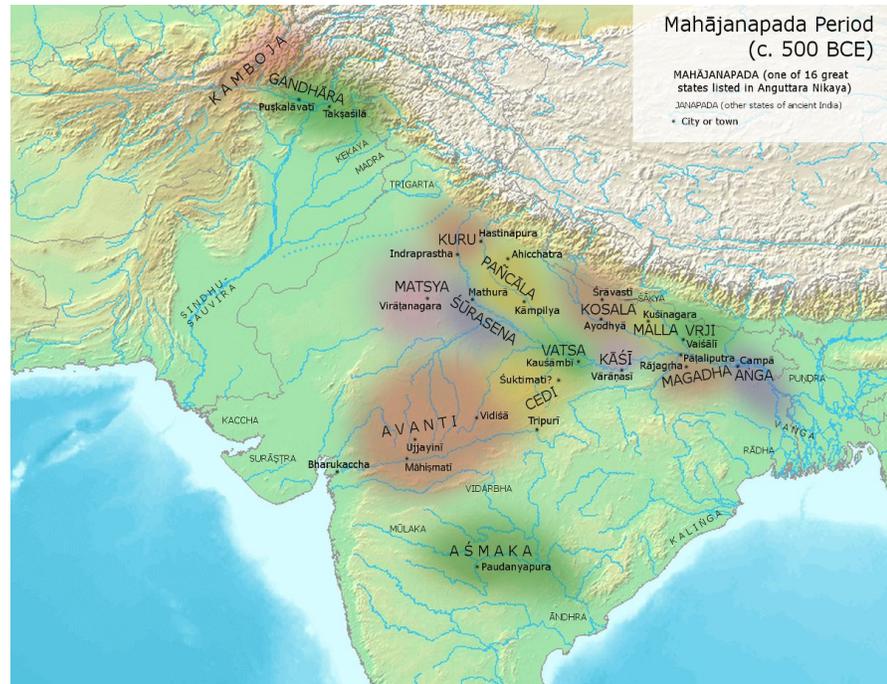
Government of India

New Delhi, India

Background

The Classical Period

Sinhalese civilization on the island begins in around 550 BCE, according to the Mahavamsa, a Sri Lankan epic detailing the rise of Buddhist Sri Lanka¹. Prince Vijaya, a prince from Vanga, one of the Vedic Janapadas in the Gangetic Valley (a kingdom often featured in



Hindu epics such as the Mahabharat and Ramayana), landed in Sri Lanka and began the Kingdom of Tambapanni, beginning nearly 2,500 years of Sri Lankan dynastic history². The Bengali heritage of the Sinhalese is also the reason as to why Sinhala is an Indo-Aryan language as opposed to Tamil, which is Dravidian.

Buddhism was propagated to Sri Lanka by Ashoka, a leader of the subcontinent-stretching Maurya Empire, and was readily accepted by the populace³. During this time, there were the first of many incursions from South India into Sri Lanka, setting a trend of Tamils and Telegus overthrowing kingdoms only to be pushed back a few years later. However, there is no evidence of significant migration from South India during this time, that comes in the Medieval Period⁴.

¹ (n.d.) retrieved from <http://mahavamsa.org/>

² (n.d.) retrieved from <http://mahavamsa.org/mahavamsa/original-version/06-coming-vijaya/>

³ (n.d.) retrieved from <http://mahavamsa.org/2008/05/king-devanampiya-tissa-306-bc/>

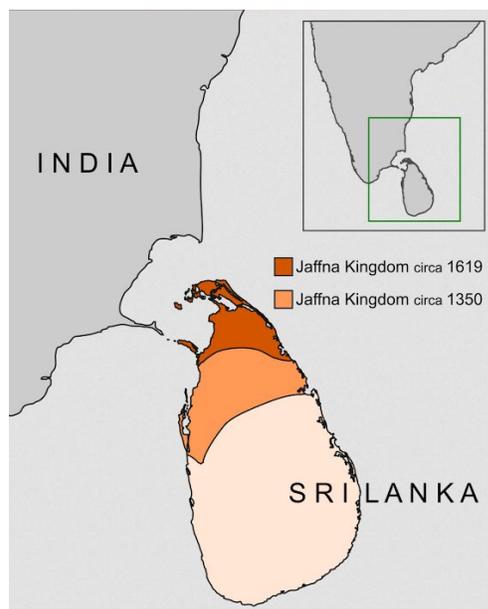
⁴ ibid

The Medieval Period⁵

The Medieval Period begins with the fall of the island encompassing Sinhalese Anuradhapura Kingdom to the Tamil Chola Empire under Rajendra I, during which the Cholas sacked the capital of Anuradhapura in the year 993 CE. Vijayabahu I reunited the island under Sinhalese rule in 1070, and monks were sent from Burmese monasteries to help restore Buddhism to the island, which nearly vanished under Chola rule. This was just the first of a series of occupations by Southern Indian based polities.⁶⁷



Core Territory of the Chola Empire Circa 1030 CE



In 1215 CE, Kalinga Magha, a Tamil of unknown origin, invaded and looted the Sinhalese kingdom of Polonnaruwa, which held all of Sri Lanka. Unlike the Cholas, who sought maritime domains to extend their sea-borne powerbase, Magha looted and destroyed the Polonnaruwa kingdom beyond recovery. With the land conquered in the process, Magha founded the Tamil Kingdom of Jaffna on the northern coast of Sri Lanka. His reign was marked by many Sinhalese migrating to the

⁵ (n.d.) retrieved from https://bharatabharati.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/chola_map.png?w=503

⁶ (n.d.) retrieved from

<https://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column-the-imperial-cholas-conquest-of-sri-lanka-2542493>

⁷ (n.d.) retrieved from https://bharatabharati.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/chola_map.png?w=503

Southern portion of Sri Lanka, to the shattered remnants of the two kingdoms that consistently fought with each other for power. From 1215 until 1505, Sri Lanka remained

in this state, with the Kingdom of Jaffna to the north, and a myriad of Sinhalese states in central and southern Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is never the same after this, and Magha holds a controversial position in Sri Lanka to this day.⁸

The Kandyan Period

The start of the early modern period of Sri Lanka is marked by the arrival of Portuguese explorer Lourenco de Almeida in 1505, who began contact with the West. After building a fort in the city of Colombo in 1517, Portugal gradually began exerting control over more and more of the coastline.⁹ Many of the coastal states

began to suffer more and more attacks from the Portuguese, and so in 1592, King Vimaladharmasūriya I, the ruler of Kandy, moved his capital to the city of Kandy, which was much further inland, for greater safety. He consolidated his rule, and the efficiency of his rule, such that the Kingdom of Kandy became the preeminent power on the island¹⁰. The Portuguese began the Campaign of Danture in 1594, seeking to establish dominion over the Kingdom of Kandy. However, the Kandyans won against the Portuguese, killing all but 83 of the 20,000 troops involved in the campaign, cementing their status as the only independent power on Sri Lanka, and the strongest power on the island. They had also weakened the Portuguese position on the island to the point where

⁸ (n.d.) retrieved from <http://www.historyatlas.com/kalinga-magha-after-the-conquest-of-rajarata>

⁹ (n.d.) retrieved from <http://www.thondaman.org/srilankanhistory.html>

¹⁰ (n.d.) retrieved from http://www.sundaytimes.lk/070304/KandyTimes/514_kt1.html



Sri Lanka in the 1520s

many of the Portuguese client kingdoms fell to the Kingdom of Kandy¹¹. The sacred Tooth Relic, a legitimizer of Sinhalese rule in Sri Lanka, was also brought to Kandy, establishing their kingdom as the legitimate rulers of the Sinhalese people¹².

[Look here for a short comic strip on resistance to Portuguese rule by the Kingdom of Kandy](#)¹³

Vimaladharmasūriya I also was the first to talk to the Dutch, who would be invaluable against the Portuguese. Eventually, in the Dutch-Portuguese War, the Kingdom of Kandy would ally with the Dutch against the Portuguese, and in 1635 the battle of Gannoruwa ended in a decisive Kandyan victory, driving the Portuguese off the island for good. The Dutch kept garrisons on many Portuguese forts and made the fort at Galle their stronghold for years to come, violating the treaty they had signed with the Kandyans that said the Dutch would leave the island. This proved to be the undoing



Vimaladharmasūriya I receiving Joris van Spilbergen, 1603



The Dutch controlled the land in magenta and in green by 1688

¹¹ (n.d.) retrieved from https://hyperleap.com/topic/Campaign_of_Danture

¹² (n.d.) retrieved from http://www.sundaytimes.lk/070304/KandyTimes/514_kt1.html

¹³ (2015) retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/polandball/comments/2m3e86/portugals_adventure_in_kandy_land/

of the alliance. The Kingdom of Kandy and the Dutch fought a few wars and shared rule of the island for the next few decades, with the Dutch controlling most Kandyan trade and economic matters. During the Dutch stay in Sri Lanka, a new ethnic group arose, the Burgher people, who were a mix of European and Sri Lankan people. They were, and still are, a small yet influential ethnic group in the nation.¹⁴

The Nayak Dynasty

The last period of Kandyan rule begins with the Tamil Nayak dynasty coming into power after King Narendrasinha's death without an heir in 1739. The Nayaks were also the ruling dynasty of the Rajadom of Madurai in Southern India, closing ties between Sri Lanka and the Tamilian Kingdoms in South India.¹⁵ Despite being Hindus themselves, the Nayaks brought about a revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and were generally less accepting of Christians than their predecessors who even patronized Catholics. This was seen by the Nayaks burning churches and persecuting Christians in high positions on occasion. In a similar vein, Tamil increasingly became the language of court life, and many in elite positions spoke Tamil, while Sinhalese, even though still spoken in court, became increasingly relegated as a language of the general populace. This caused friction between the Nayakkar nobility and the Sinhalese nobles, the adigars, resulting in the nobility revolting against



The Madurai Nayak state in relation to India and Sri Lanka

¹⁴ (2003) retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?id=h2mkUharg6AC>

¹⁵ (n.d.) retrieved from https://hyperleap.com/topic/Nayaks_of_Kandy

the Nayaks a few times, one of which had to be put down by asking for Dutch assistance¹⁶.

The relationship with the Dutch was a complicated one. While the Dutch enjoyed trading privileges, and controlled important ports, the Nayaks of Kandy frequently raided Dutch land, taking bits of land from the Dutch in the process. As a subsidiary of the Dutch East Indies based in Batavia (now Jakarta), governors in Sri Lanka were under orders to avoid conflict with the Kandyans to keep friendly relations to maintain profits; territory was not the main interest. However, after a large invasion of Dutch ports, the Dutch retaliated and landlocked Kandy, and torched the capitol. The British were asked by Kandy to help defend them, but the British refused¹⁷.

The Arrival of the British

The French Wars of Revolution brought the Dutch to their knees, and the Nayaks took that as their opportunity to strike. Dutch Ceylon sided with the Batavian Republic (the French-aligned revolutionary state that overthrew the Kingdom of the Netherlands). The British and Kandyans coordinated attacks, and a treaty was signed where the British were given the port of Trincomalee in the Northeast, while Kandy was given the rest of the



Frederick North, first British Governor of Ceylon

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ (2017) Obeyesekere, Gananath. "Between the Portuguese and the Nāyakas: the Many Faces of the Kandyan Kingdom, 1591–1765." *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History*, edited by Zoltán Biedermann and Alan Strathern, UCL Press, London, 2017, pp. 161–177. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1qmw8bs.13.

island; the Dutch were gone. However, the Nayak king who negotiated the treaty died, and his heir refused to acknowledge the treaty¹⁸. As such, the British simply began to administer the territory they took¹⁹.

After a group of British troops were beaten by Kandyan forces, and refused to pay reparations, the British declared the First Kandyan War. The Kandyans ended up winning the first war, successfully defending their territory through greater knowledge of the land, resistance to local diseases that plagued the British troops, and guerilla tactics. However Sri Vikrama Rajasinha, the king, began to act increasingly more erratic after a Sinhalese uprising nearly dethroned him, and he began to seize land and valuables, as well as ordering harsh executions of high-ranking figures who went against him, such as the Prime Minister of the kingdom, turning the nobility and populace against him. Many of the Sinhalese nobles defected in the Second Kandyan War, where the British won, Rajasinha was exiled to India, and Kandy was absorbed into the Crown Colony of Ceylon. Just as the first Sri Lankan king hailed from India and was Indian, the last one hailed from Sri Lanka, but from an Indian family.



Sri Vikrama Rajasinha, the last ruling Sri Lankan monarch

Local chieftains eventually realized that they were subservient to even junior British officers, and instigated the Uva revolt, where every major Kandyan chief, except for one, participated in the revolt. It was put down, however, and the British set out on

¹⁸ ibid

¹⁹ (n.d.) retrieved from

<https://www.colonialvoyage.com/trincomalee-first-british-occupation-definitive-dutch-surrender/>

breaking the power of the nobles, rather than co-opting them into the system as originally planned, leading to a system of governance that would eventually lead to the Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms in the late 19th century, which would usher in the Modern Period, characterized by parliamentary rule and a single government over Sri Lanka's maritime and Kandyan provinces²⁰.

Direct British Colonial Rule

A large part of this conflict can be attributed to British colonial rule when the island was known as Ceylon. Prior to their arrival, there was little tension among Sri Lanka's two largest ethnic groups among the non-nobility. However, in order to consolidate their power, the British administration used a policy of "divide and rule," much like they did in their other colonies, in order to divide the natives and thus further their own interests.

The advent of missionaries from Europe led to a revival amongst Hindu Tamils who saw the need to strengthen their own culture in order to protect their people from conversion to Christianity. They built their own institutions which eventually made them more confident as a community and led to a cultural and linguistic revival in the 19th century. ²¹



20

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160102192549/http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2016/01/02/colebrooke-british-governor%E2%80%99s-infamous-gazette-notification>

²¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/sri_lanka/50926.stm

In the early 20th century, Great Britain decided to appoint Poonambalam Arunachalam, a Tamil, as the representative for all of Sri Lanka in the national legislative council. Under his leadership, both the Sinhalese and Tamil leaders united to form the Ceylon National Congress in order to get more constitutional reforms from the colonial government. This period is noted as perhaps the most harmonious period in Sri Lankan history between Tamil and Sinhalese leadership since Magha's invasion.

Seeing this unity and an increased pressure on the colonial government, British Governor William Manning decided to introduce the concept of Communal representation that had been successful in splitting communities in other colonies. This meant that there were separate electorates for each community (Sinhalese and Tamil) and each community got a certain number of seats in the legislature that were based off its population. This gave the Tamils a lot of representation, out of proportion with the population of the Tamil community. Eventually, these separate electorates were replaced by Universal franchise that was brought about by the Donoughmore Commission. This was vehemently opposed by Tamil leaders as they believed that it would give Sinhalese over 50% of the seats and not give minorities enough representation. This question of representation created a bitter ethnic rivalry that has persisted ever since.

Post Independence

This wedge created by the British continued to linger post Independence. Tensions continued to prevail among the two groups in Sri Lanka, especially since the Government and Parliament were controlled largely by the Sinhalese majority. In 1956, soon after the British left, English was replaced by Sinhala as the only official language of the country by the passage of the Sinhala Only Act. This greatly affected the Tamil population and was seen as an attempt to economically isolate them as they wouldn't be able to work in any public service because they didn't speak Sinhala.

The Tamil federal party strongly opposed this act and its leaders launched a *satyagraha* (non violence) campaign. This enhanced communal tensions and saw multiple riots break out across the country. In a bid to reduce these tensions, the Government decided to negotiate with the Federal party and agreed to make Tamil the administrative language in the north and east region of the country. However, this led to strong resistance from Sinhala nationalists and eventually the settlement had to be called off.²²

1958 Riots

In May 1958, the Tamil Federal Party was to hold a convention in a town called Vavuniya. A small incident between the two communities had taken place elsewhere, but the story was twisted, and rumours about Tamil aggression were spread. In retaliation, Sinhalese leaders decided to disrupt Federal Party members travelling by

²² <https://www.cfr.org/background/sri-lankan-conflict>

rail to the convention. They mercilessly attacked trains and injured multiple people. Polonnaruwa station, where one of the attacks took place, was completely destroyed. This was a key turning point in the conflict as it sparked violence between the two communities across the country.

The Polonnaruwa District saw deadly violence, with Tamils being killed in the open, as well as the Sinhalese who protected them. Tamil farm labourers were mercilessly massacred on their fields with many Sinhalese mobs burning down entire fields. The Government took little action to control the situation and the Sinhalese policemen who tried to protect the Tamils were also attacked by the mobs. In retaliation, Tamil groups began attacking Sinhalese people in Tamil dominated areas. There was large scale destruction of property, both personal and public, and a complete disregard for human lives by both sides.

In September 1958, four months after these riots, the Government passed the Tamil Language Act - which provided for the use of Tamil as the medium for instruction in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

²³

Discriminatory Policies

The policy of standardization was an affirmative action scheme to assist geographically disadvantaged students to gain skill based education. University seat

²³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12004081>

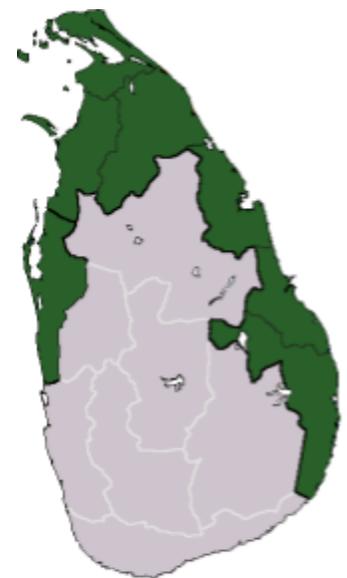
allocations were proportional to the number of participants who sat to take the exam in that language. As a result of this, the number of Tamil students in University dropped significantly. Previously, Tamil students would gain admission in higher proportion than their participation in examinations. This was seen as discriminatory and the Tamil community strongly opposed it.

Additionally, the Government put a number of restrictions on the Tamil population. Tamil land was taken over by Sinhalese people with ease and the import of Tamil language media was banned across the country. Lastly, in 1978 the Constitution gave preference to Buddhism, the religion followed by most of the Sinhalese population. This restrictive legislation adversely affected the Tamil community and their interests. They gradually began to organize and unite against the Sinhalese domination.²⁴

Current Situation

Eelam War 1

Tamil militant groups began to develop in the north and eastern Sri Lanka in retaliation to the oppressive policies of the Government. The most prominent of these was the Tamil New Tigers which later changed its name to LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). Their goal was to create a Tamil state in northern Sri Lanka, akin to the



The area claimed by the LTTE as Tamil Eelam

²⁴ <http://listserv.linguistlist.org/pipermail/lgpolicy-list/2008-March/006828.html>

Jaffna Kingdom that had preceded them. This group attacked institutions of the government, such as the police and the military, while also targeting Tamil politicians who attempted negotiations with the Government.

In May 1981, politicians from the ruling party burned down Jaffna library using police and paramilitary forces which resulted in the loss of a lot of Tamil literature. This incident meant that the Tamil people had now lost all faith in the Government's ability to protect them, and believed that a separate state was their best option.

LTTE's initial strategy was to carry out multiple assassinations. In 1977, A Tamil member of Parliament was assassinated by Prabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE, himself. In July 1983, the LTTE launched a deadly ambush on the Sri Lankan Army outside the town of Thirunelveli, which killed over 10 soldiers.

In reaction to this, there was large scale anti-Tamil rioting in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo. Over the next few weeks, thousands of Tamils were killed across the country by angry Sinhalese mobs. Millions of homes were destroyed and over 100,000 people became homeless. While violence has fizzled out since then, there still continue to be isolated incidents in different parts of the country.

Over the last few years, the LTTE has established itself as the pre-eminent militant group in Sri Lanka. They have carried out ghastly attacks on their opponents,

and have either merged with or eliminated other Tamil extremist groups. Due to their extremist activities, many Tamil political parties oppose their vision for an independent Tamil state and instead prefer to work with the Sri Lankan government. However, the LTTE still enjoys popular support within many areas of Northern Sri Lanka.²⁵

Analysis and Conclusion

As we, the Indian Cabinet watch on in **mid 1987 now**, the situation seems to be worsening. The aspirations of the LTTE are not necessarily limited to Sri Lanka. While there does not exist much in the way of popular support for the creation of a “Tamil Eelam” that includes Tamil areas of India, there are a few groups within Southern India that seek to help the LTTE create an independent state for all Tamils, including Indian ones. These are parties such as the Pure Tamil Movement, Dravidar Khazigam, and Kamaraj Congress groups. As such, the LTTE poses a threat to India’s territorial sovereignty. The Indian cabinet will have to contend with possible retributions in Southern India for any actions this body takes in Sri Lanka.

Something else to consider are war crimes. Should India be the arbitrator of justice in the region? Should this body hold both sides accountable for the atrocities that they have committed, or should this body be pragmatic and simply side with whomever is best for India? What about international reactions? The Tamil and Sinhalese diaspora in India, Canada, Malaysia, and other nations, and their reactions, will have to be considered as well.

²⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2008/11/2008112019115851343.html>

Likewise, as with any peacekeeping action, this cabinet will have to look at and justify costs to the Indian people. India is not an especially rich nation, and has the hostile powers of Pakistan and China to contend with; why should the populace care about Sri Lanka? Why not let them kill each other and have India do nothing? Similarly, how long would any peacekeeping operations stay? Studies have shown that peacekeeping operations that stop active combat and leave aren't nearly as successful as those that stay. Yet, these more effective operations are much more costly. What will you decide to do?