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Sri Lanka: The Challenge of Communal Violence



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An Intelligence Assessment

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*NESA 84-10201
June 1984*

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Sri Lanka: The Challenge of Communal Violence



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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [redacted]
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Central Reference. Comments and queries are
welcome and may be addressed to the Chief, South
Asia Division, NESAs, [redacted]

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**Sri Lanka:
The Challenge of
Communal Violence**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 16 May 1984
was used in this report.*

President Jayewardene's failure to deal with the demands of Sri Lanka's Tamil minority—18 percent of the population—has brought the Tamils to the brink of open insurrection. In our judgment, Jayewardene, through his political maneuvering since his election in 1977, has contributed to the deterioration of communal relations by:

- Failing to share political power with minority groups and renegeing on other campaign promises made to the Tamil community.
- Publicly announcing his commitment to his Sinhalese Buddhist constituency at the height of last summer's communal riots.
- Implementing punitive antiterrorism measures and failing to discipline security forces responsible for violence against Tamil civilians.

These actions have played into the hands of Tamil extremists. They have reduced the influence of Tamil moderates and have converted what had been a demand for limited autonomy into an insurgency calling for complete separation from the Sinhalese majority.

Most Tamils are aware that an independent Tamil state in Sri Lanka is economically and politically untenable. Tamil demands probably would be satisfied by a federal structure that would guarantee Tamils control over security and economic development where they comprise the majority of the population.

Relations between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamils are complicated by the role of India. New Delhi probably will seek to exhaust its political options before intervening militarily in Sri Lanka because of concern about both Sinhalese retaliation against Tamils and its own international image. Prime Minister Gandhi, however, has made clear to Jayewardene her willingness to act forcefully if the situation in Sri Lanka deteriorates much further. We believe the Indian military over the last several months has improved its ability to mount operations against Sri Lanka. Moreover, New Delhi continues to provide support to Sri Lankan Tamil insurgents based in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

Indian military intervention probably would be aimed at reducing anti-Tamil violence and forcing Colombo to accept a political settlement to the Sinhalese-Tamil problem. We believe it highly unlikely that New Delhi would seek long-term military involvement in Sri Lanka.

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President Jayewardene remains immensely popular with Sri Lanka's Sinhalese Buddhist majority and probably would be returned to office in a popular election. Moreover, the political opposition is in disarray. In the event of the President's death during the remaining four years of his term, his party can turn to several energetic and attractive young cabinet ministers who have the experience and caste background needed to win a national election, although they cannot expect to obtain the popular support that has been given Jayewardene. None of Jayewardene's probable successors would be likely to offer major concessions to the Tamils for fear of losing Sinhalese support.

Jayewardene will attempt to portray a series of high-level exchanges and programs with the United States as indications of US support for his policies. His state visit to Washington in June will be the highlight of these exchanges.

Colombo's failure to resolve the country's communal problems makes US relations with all the countries of the region more difficult. New Delhi is sensitive to any potential involvement by the United States in the affairs of the region and will watch closely for the outcome of Jayewardene's trip to Washington. Although the assertion has been officially denied several times, Prime Minister Gandhi apparently continues to believe the United States is seeking to gain port facilities at Trincomalee for the US Navy.




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**Sri Lanka:
The Challenge of
Communal Violence** 


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The ethnic violence between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority that raged throughout Sri Lanka last summer reopened old communal wounds and revealed new tension that threatens the stability of President Jayewardene's government. Jayewardene has made only halfhearted efforts to achieve communal reconciliation and increasingly has shown himself ready to take repressive measures against the Tamils. The increased violence has damaged relations between India and Sri Lanka and threatens to harm US interests in the region. 

The Cultural Setting

Ethnic violence and antagonism are deeply rooted in Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese and Tamils each think of themselves as a minority community, according to scholarly accounts. The Sinhalese, who constitute 74 percent of the population, view themselves as guardians of a unique language and culture and as constantly under threat of submersion by the massive Indian presence on the subcontinent. They see Sri Lankan Tamils, who comprise 18 percent of the population, as fifth columnists for the 41 million Tamils in India only 30 kilometers across the Palk Strait. Sri Lankan Tamils, who note that their community has lived on the island for more than a millenium, are proud of the evolution of their culture and language. Although conscious of the Tamil community in south India, they view Sri Lanka as their traditional homeland. 

The Sinhalese

The Sinhala-speaking people of Sri Lanka have inhabited the island for more than 2,500 years and are an offshoot of the Indo-Aryan cultures that settled north India. Nearly constant war with the Tamil kingdoms of southern India, dynastic squabbling, recurrent drought, and European expansion forced the traditional culture from the coastal region to the mountainous region centered on Kandy and its environs. 

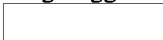
**Sri Lanka: Population by
Ethnic Group and Religion, 1981**

	Number of Persons	Percent of Population
Ethnic group	14,851,000	100.0
Sinhalese	10,986,000	74.0
Ceylon Tamil	1,872,000	12.6
Indian Tamil	825,000	5.6
Ceylon Moor	1,057,000	7.1
Other	111,000	0.7
Religion	14,851,000	100.0
Buddhist	10,293,000	69.3
Hindu	2,296,000	15.5
Muslim	1,135,000	7.6
Catholic	1,010,000	6.8
Christian	102,000	0.7
Other	15,000	0.1

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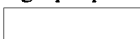


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Scholarly studies note that Sinhalese share a common world view shaped by their perception of themselves as the inheritors of a great classical tradition. This view is marked by adherence to and respect for Buddhism, preservation of the Sinhala language, and resistance to foreign aggression—historically, Tamil expansionism. 

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Ceylon Tamils

Ceylon Tamils migrated to Sri Lanka in several waves during the last 1,000 years and are concentrated largely in the north and northeast parts of the island. They are important in mercantile and financial activities throughout the country and form a large proportion of the country's professional classes. 

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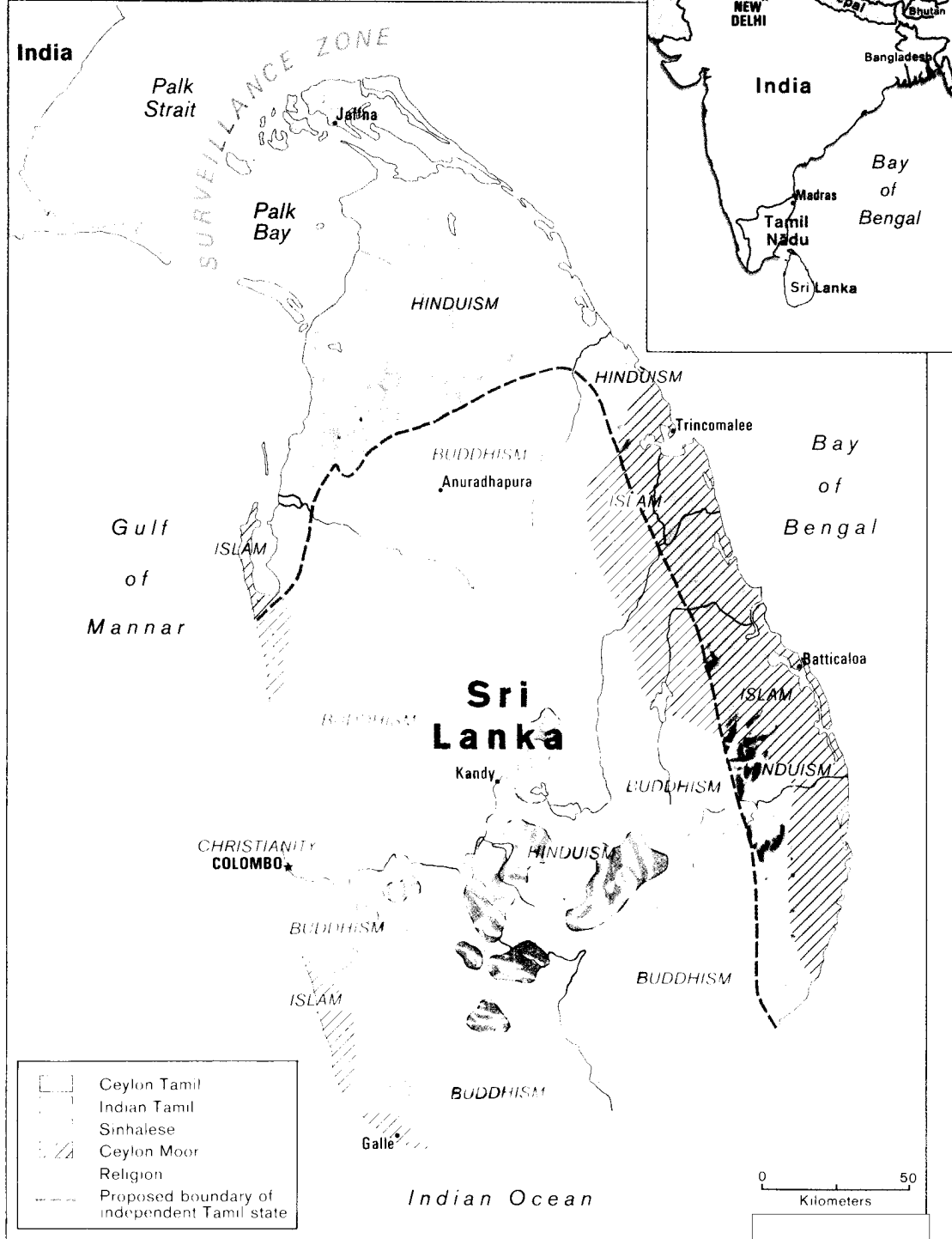
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Ethnic Groups and Religions in Sri Lanka



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Buddhism and Buddhist Institutions in Sri Lanka

Buddhism was introduced into Sri Lanka from India in the third century BC and through the patronage of ruling dynasties rapidly became the dominant religion of the country. The Theravada School became the established religion of the court by the medieval period. Theravada Buddhism also is practiced in Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and parts of Vietnam. Religious missions and visits over the centuries have fostered warm relations among these countries.

With independence in 1948, Buddhism started to reassert its influence as the reservoir of Sinhalese language and custom. The number of monks in the country grew rapidly, the traditional system of monk-teachers in the schools reappeared, and monks began to enter new fields such as politics, medicine, and government service. Monks began to be seen as nationalist leaders and to gain fame for their impassioned public sermons calling for the establishment of Sinhala as the national language. The apex of Buddhist monk involvement in national politics occurred in 1959 when, at the height of the "Sinhala Only" movement, a radical monk assassinated Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike.

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Under colonial rule the country's Buddhist institutions came under increasing attack. By the end of the 19th century the British had nearly destroyed the traditional social structure that maintained the clergy. Schools, lands, and other sources of revenue passed into the hands of the Colonial Office.

In Sri Lanka today Buddhism plays a profound role in shaping the social and political thinking of the Sinhalese. The resurgence of the religion in the last few decades coupled with the political utility of identifying the Sinhalese people, the Sinhala language, and the Sinhalese homeland as a rallying point are powerful factors increasing the polarization of the Tamil and Sinhalese communities.

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Buddhism began to reestablish itself in the country in the first decades of this century. Various nationalist groups renounced the trappings of colonialism and began to foster a resurgence of traditional Sinhalese culture, including support to the Buddhist clergy and the social institutions of the religion.

The Tamils' group identity is maintained through use of Tamil as their mother tongue and by observing certain distinctive features of caste and custom. Scholars note that Ceylon Tamils, aware that they share their language and customs with the much larger Tamil community of south India and with the substantial Tamil communities of Africa and south-east Asia, lack the sense of isolation and insularity exhibited by the Sinhalese. Ceylon Tamils are more than 90 percent Hindu.

the country's Tamils, they are generally members of low Hindu castes and do not identify with Ceylon Tamils. Indian Tamils are represented in the government by the head of their trade union. They have not been actively involved in the country's communal conflicts.

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Roots of Communal Violence

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Indian Tamils

The "Indian Tamils" form a distinct segment of Sri Lanka's Tamil population. Most are descendants of the agricultural laborers from south India recruited during British rule to work on tea plantations in the central highlands. Isolated physically from the rest of

When the British turned the country over to an elected government composed of Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim representatives in 1948, the overriding concern of all ethnic communities was to achieve a unified and independent nation. The coalition that formed the first government agreed to postpone until after independence nagging questions concerning relations between the communal groups.

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Tamil stores destroyed by Sinhalese mobs, July 1983. Large blocks of Tamil property in Colombo and the surrounding area were burned or looted during the weeklong rampage.



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Following independence, political constituencies formed increasingly along ethnic lines. A party's electoral success grew in proportion to its ability to appeal to particular ethnic or religious groups. Each succeeding election campaign was marked by progressively more strident stands on communal issues and more frequent outbreaks of communal violence.

By the general election of 1956—only eight years after independence—Sinhalese-dominated parties had gained control of the government and driven the small Tamil parties out of the mainstream of political life. Sporadic efforts to find political formulas to reduce communal tensions have been largely unsuccessful, in our view, because of mutual suspicions and continuing appeals by most politicians to ethnic antagonisms to build electoral support.

Polarization

The increasing rigidity of communal politics and the continuing failure of the central government to respond to communal demands, in our view, have fostered the growth of radicalism, terrorism, and violence. Disaffected Tamil youths formed terrorist "Tiger" organizations in the mid-1970s, which have been responsible for bombings, robberies, and political

assassinations. Faced with the threat of personal violence as well as their constituents' longstanding distrust of the Sinhalese, many Tamil politicians have been compelled to take an increasingly hard line in communal negotiations. On the Sinhalese side, youths, often encouraged by chauvinistic politicians, have formed secret gangs to terrorize local Tamils and organize communal riots.

The two communities have remained at loggerheads over intertwined issues of federalism and access to the benefits of modernization. The Tamils, according to Embassy and scholarly reports, have become convinced that they should have both an autonomous homeland with control over security forces and access to more economic development projects. The Sinhalese, in contrast, will allow no division of their island homeland and do not want to cede control over national development projects.

The ethnic animosity between the two groups burst to the surface in July 1983, when the worst communal riots in Sri Lanka's history left more than 400 Tamils dead and thousands homeless. Gangs of Sinhalese, sometimes assisted by Army troops and policemen, attacked Tamils, their homes, and their businesses.

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Tamil Resistance Organizations

Tamil terrorist groups have drawn most of their active members from unemployed, frustrated university students, a group that has most acutely felt the effects of Colombo's discriminatory educational and employment practices. Such students also have been exposed to the international rhetoric of terrorism and have characterized their movement as "People's Liberation," "Resistance to Genocide," and other slogans common to international terrorist groups.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Members of several groups have received training with the PLO, the IRA, and West German terrorist groups and are known to have camps in many parts of India. The main source of support from abroad comes from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, whose 41 million Tamils are in sympathy with the insurgent movement and provide sanctuary and help not only to the militants but to the large number of refugees who flee Sri Lanka following each wave of ethnic violence.

[redacted]

We believe the insurgents are well financed and maintain large stores of arms obtained from robberies of security forces and police stations and through contacts in the Middle East. The expatriate Sri Lankan Tamil community is well organized and remits substantial sums to the insurgents. Bank robberies are another source of funding and have been a special favorite of the PLOTE and LTTE groups.

[redacted]

The term "Tigers" came into use in Sri Lanka in the mid-1970s to identify members of various Tamil extremist separatist organizations representing a wide range of terrorist sympathies. We believe none of these groups consist of more than a few dozen hardcore members at any one time. The most important groups are listed below in order of prominence and level of activity.

People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) (also known as Tamil State Liberation

Tigers, TSLT). Founded by Uma Maheshwaran. [redacted]

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Tamil Eelam Republican Army (TERA). Also led by Uma Maheshwaran; considered to be the more radical wing of PLOTE. [redacted]

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Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) (also known as Terros). Led by Velupillai Prabhakaran; broke with the PLOTE. The leaders of both groups are involved in a blood feud for control of the organizations. [redacted]

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Tamil Eelam Liberation Army (TELA). Founded by Kuttimani (killed in the Colombo prison riots of July 1983); then led by Kulasegaram Devasegaram (also known as Oberoi Devan), who was assassinated by the LTTE in August 1983. [redacted]

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Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO). As of March 1983 led by Sri Sabaratnam (also known as Tall Sri). [redacted]

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Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS). Said to be led by "Annailingam." Reported to be the parent organization of the more militant EPRLF. [redacted]

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Tamil Eelam Liberation Front (TELF). Broke with the more moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in 1982; led by Kovi Mahesan and V. Dharmalingam. [redacted]

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Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). Led by U. Ranjan and V. Perumal; claims to have more than 600 members training in India. Refers to its action squads as the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which claimed responsibility for kidnaping two US AID workers in Jaffna in May 1984. [redacted]

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Cobras. Local Tamil group in the Batticaloa area; said to represent local Tamil and Muslim interests distinct from the Jaffna groups. [redacted]

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Many local observers believe that government officials, perhaps including some cabinet ministers, aided and encouraged the rampage. [redacted]

Jayewardene has carefully avoided identifying himself or his party with any of the recommendations proposed at the conference. He has effectively put distance between himself and any discussion hinting at the creation of a regional or federal administrative system for Tamil majority areas. According to US Embassy reporting, both Jayewardene's United National Party (UNP) and the major Sinhalese opposition party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) of ex-Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, fear getting too far ahead of their conservative Sinhalese Buddhist constituencies. The SLFP walked out of the talks in an apparent effort to portray itself as the staunchest defender of the traditional Buddhist electorate. Leaders of the three major Buddhist lay organizations walked out a week later. [redacted]

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The riots badly damaged the ability of President Jayewardene to mediate ethnic demands. Jayewardene had attracted a large number of Tamil voters in the election in 1977 with promises to create a system of regional development and administrative councils in Tamil areas—a promise that was never fulfilled. Faced with the evidence of the depth of Sinhalese communal feelings during the riots, the President, in our view, chose to save his own political position. He did little during the first days of violence. Moreover, according to press accounts, Jayewardene's initial speech after the riots referred only to the needs of the "Sinhalese people"—he failed to mention the suffering of the Tamil victims. [redacted]

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The failure of the conference was followed by a resurgence in communal violence during the spring of 1984. Since February, Tamil Tiger attacks have increased against isolated military outposts. [redacted]

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Following the riots, the President appeared to align himself even more closely with the Sinhalese. According to press and Embassy reports, Jayewardene pushed through Parliament constitutional changes outlawing any political party calling for partition of the country, in effect disenfranchising the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), which represents the moderate Tamil view. The President and his closest advisers in early August allowed Sinhalese chauvinist groups to begin moving landless Sinhalese farmers into the choice lands of the Mahaweli Irrigation Project, an area traditionally claimed by Tamil peasants. Following an outcry by Tamil leaders, Jayewardene declared the land would again become state property, but new apportionment schemes clearly will give much of the land to the Sinhalese. [redacted]

In the first insurgent action against foreigners in Sri Lanka, an American couple connected with a US AID project in Jaffna was kidnaped for five days in May before being released unharmed. Their abductors identified themselves as members of the People's Liberation Army, the militant Marxist-Leninist faction of the most radical insurgent group. According to the group's spokesman in Madras, the kidnaping was an attempt to focus international attention on the plight of the "oppressed Tamil people of Sri Lanka" and to highlight their claim that US intelligence forces were assisting Jayewardene in repressing Tamils. [redacted]

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The President's convening of an all-parties conference in December 1983 was an obvious response to demands from New Delhi and elsewhere that efforts be made at communal reconciliation. The TULF was excluded, however, and the effort has been plagued by walkouts and boycotts staged by representatives of both the Tamil and Sinhalese communities. The conference has held intermittent meetings for more than five months, but, in our view, it has served primarily as a sounding board for venting ethnic grievances. [redacted]

We believe current Tamil sentiment is that Jayewardene has made no serious effort to meet moderate Tamil demands for limited economic and political autonomy for Tamil majority areas, equal use of Tamil and Sinhala languages in national affairs, or guarantees of equality of communal groups in governmental hiring and education. Recent US travelers to Tamil areas found wide support for the Tigers and no optimism about a political settlement. [redacted]

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Tamil Tigers' leader Prabhakaran in Jaffna [redacted] India Today ©

seeks stability in Sri Lanka and at the same time is under pressure from the Tamils in the Indian state of Tamil Nādu to protect Sri Lankan Tamils. [redacted]

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Although Prime Minister Gandhi has used her good offices to bring together representatives of the Tamil separatists and the central government [redacted]

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[redacted] New Delhi is also granting sanctuary to Sri Lankan Tamil insurgents in Tamil Nadu and has permitted the creation of numerous training camps near New Delhi, Madras, and elsewhere in the country [redacted]

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We believe New Delhi's support for Sri Lanka's Tamil separatists probably is an effort to control a movement it cannot eradicate. Gandhi cannot move against Sri Lankan Tamils in Tamil Nadu without risking the loss of Indian Tamil votes in this election year. Moreover, New Delhi sees its involvement with Tamil insurgents as an important adjunct to India's diplomatic and military options. [redacted]

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We believe the frustrations of the last year have convinced even moderate Tamils they must press for a separate homeland with the hope of achieving at least a federal relationship with Colombo. According to Embassy reports, the ferocity of last summer's riots and the continuing intransigence of Sinhalese representatives at the bargaining table have pushed the Tamils into a political corner. At the very least, we assess that most Tamils believe they must have control of the security forces in Tamil majority areas and management of national development programs that affect Tamils. [redacted]

The specter of a trained force of Tamil insurgents in Tamil Nadu responsive to New Delhi, however, complicates Jayewardene's efforts to maintain a dialogue between the two communities. In our judgment, Tamil separatists believe New Delhi backs their efforts and are likely to raise the level of violence to bring about a Sinhalese backlash. [redacted]

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[redacted] their leaders believe a repetition of last summer's violence would draw India into the struggle and secure partition of the country. [redacted]

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Gandhi wants to forestall intervention in Sri Lanka by the superpowers. Indian officials reacted with dismay last summer after hearing of Sri Lanka's thinly veiled pleas for security help from several countries, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Within days of the outbreak of violence, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister had asked for US support for the Jayewardene government, including weapons, training in antiguerrilla techniques, and

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The India Factor

Prime Minister Gandhi, in our view, believes ethnic violence in Sri Lanka can have serious repercussions for India as well as her own political future. Colombo's handling of last summer's violence has heightened Indian concern about Sri Lanka's commitment to protect its Tamil minority. We believe New Delhi

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**Major Communal Disorders
Since Independence (1948)**

June 1956—Crowds of more than 10,000 Sinhalese attack peaceful Tamil demonstration calling for language equality with Sinhala. [redacted]

November 1979—Sinhalese security forces clash with Tamil demonstrators, burn the rare Tamil manuscript collection of the Jaffna Library. [redacted]

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Spring 1958—Failure of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Agreement to create a Tamil state within a national federal government results in mass riots and the movement of thousands of Tamils to Jaffna. [redacted]

Spring 1983—More than a dozen separate terrorist incidents leave over 30 dead, 100 wounded, several hundred arrested, and the imposition of an island-wide curfew. [redacted]

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April 1961—National emergency imposed to halt riots following Tamil Federal Party's peaceful demonstrations for language equality. [redacted]

July 1983—Following increased terrorist attacks in the northern part of the island, Sinhalese mobs in Colombo and other southern cities riot, leaving more than 400 dead and 130,000 Tamils displaced. [redacted]

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January 1966—Sinhalese in Colombo riot following passage of Tamil Language Special Provisions Act; large numbers of Tamils flee north. [redacted]

March 1984—Widespread terrorist attacks throughout Tamil areas in the north. [redacted]

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July 1975—Assassination of mayor of Jaffna (a Tamil) by Tamil terrorists for cooperating with the predominantly Sinhalese central government provokes local rioting. [redacted]

March 1984—Lalith Athulathmudali made Minister for National Security; initiates "Surveillance Zone" around the northern coastline. [redacted]

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August 1977—Communal violence originating in Jaffna spreads to urban areas of south Sri Lanka; 120 dead, 50,000 displaced, 5,000 Tamils move to Jaffna. [redacted]

April 1984—Sri Lankan Navy fires on alleged terrorist craft in Surveillance Zone, capturing five Tamil suspects and killing 13 others. [redacted]

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Summer 1979—Following terrorist attacks and riots, state of emergency declared in Jaffna. [redacted]

May 1984—Two US AID workers kidnaped by the EPRLF; held five days and released unharmed. [redacted]

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a show of force by the US Navy. Each of these suggestions was rejected by Washington, and Jayewardene subsequently denied ever having made them. [redacted]



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The Possibility of Indian Intervention

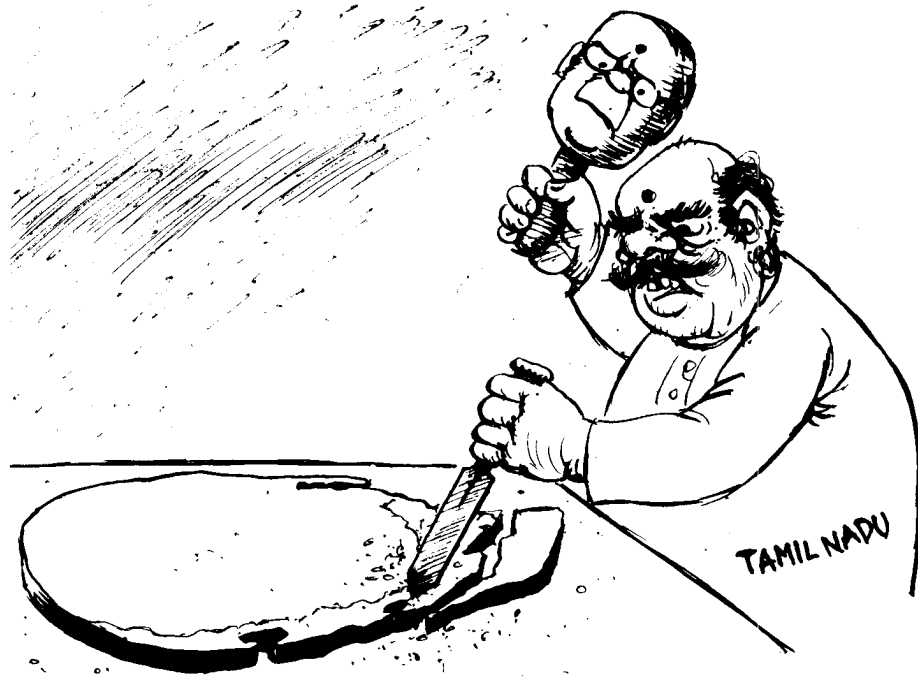
New Delhi is preparing for the possibility of direct military intervention. In the aftermath of the ethnic violence in Sri Lanka last summer, India's Defense Council, chaired by Prime Minister Gandhi, considered various military options for dealing with another serious outbreak of rioting on the island. [redacted]

We judge that Gandhi considers any one of the following possible scenarios as serious enough to

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This cartoon illustrates the common Sinhalese belief that Tamils from the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu are actively supporting the efforts of the Sri Lankan Tamil separatists in an attempt to divide the country. [redacted]



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justify increased Indian diplomatic pressure on Colombo and, if unsuccessful, direct military intervention:

- Large numbers of Tamil refugees leaving Sri Lanka for sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, thereby destabilizing the state and straining relations between Madras and New Delhi.
- Large-scale internal disorders that would threaten to attract foreign intervention from within or outside South Asia.
- Human rights abuses by the government that would increase pressure from Indian Tamils on New Delhi.
- Increasingly large numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils receiving foreign terrorist support (PLO, Libya) and then transiting or basing in south India.
- Any sign that Sri Lankan Tamil separatism would trigger a resurgence of separatism in Tamil Nadu.

The Indian Navy, in our view, can launch a small amphibious assault force against Sri Lanka on short notice. We estimate that the Navy's six modern Soviet landing ships and four Indian-produced utility landing craft can move, in a single lift, one fully equipped infantry battalion and some supporting armor. [redacted]

Sri Lanka's 25,000-man military (active duty and reserve personnel combined), in our view, could offer only token resistance to an amphibious invasion by India. They are primarily an internal security force, understaffed and ill equipped. The Army has few armored personnel carriers; the Navy has only small patrol craft; the Air Force has no combat aircraft.

[redacted]

Outlook

In our opinion, the likelihood of a peaceful resolution of the tensions that divide Sri Lankan society is rapidly diminishing. Younger and more militant communal leaders of both communities, raised in a post-colonial atmosphere emphasizing ethnic differences, are less ready to compromise and more prone to violence. We believe Jayewardene's June visit to the United States will most likely trigger a new round of Tamil insurgent activity and Sinhalese retaliation and again raise the possibility of Indian intervention.

[redacted]

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Jayewardene, faced with the intransigence of his Sinhalese constituency, will make no real concessions. The government may offer a new form of district development councils to give the appearance of conciliation, but we believe the Tamil politicians will not accept any proposal that does not include substantial local autonomy, including control of police and security forces in predominantly Tamil areas. [redacted]

followed by several suggestions from Jayewardene that a friendship treaty would be to the advantage of both countries. [redacted]

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We see no evidence that Jayewardene's rule is threatened or that any of his potential successors have actively challenged his authority as a result of last summer's disturbances. Although several members of the President's United National Party have been building political constituencies, in our view none has the wide range of caste and community support that Jayewardene can still call upon. Moreover, none of the President's potential successors is likely to risk loss of Sinhalese support by advocating a change in communal policy sufficient to satisfy even moderate Tamils. [redacted]

Jayewardene also is attempting to portray a series of high-level visits and programs as support for his government. Jayewardene will make a state visit to the United States in June. He also has welcomed the US Peace Corps back to the country and supported an increase in Voice of America activities on the island. [redacted]

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We believe that India will seek to exhaust political options before taking military action. Prime Minister Gandhi has not yet raised the issue of human rights for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority in the meetings of the Nonaligned Movement or the United Nations, nor has New Delhi responded to the demands by the government of Tamil Nadu to mount an investigation into Sri Lanka's communal affairs. We judge that Gandhi is aware that military intervention might provoke widespread attacks by Sinhalese against Tamils before Indian forces could consolidate control. An Indian military move also would blemish New Delhi's credentials in the Nonaligned Movement and damage relations with Pakistan, which would see the intervention as yet another example of India's determination to exercise hegemony in the region. [redacted]

Increased identification with Jayewardene at this time could damage US prestige in the region and in parts of the Third World. It could be perceived by other small ethnic groups as acceptance by the United States of the use of repression against minorities. Moreover, elements of the highly politicized Tamil minority in Sri Lanka might even turn to the Soviet Union for support. The terrorists who abducted two American citizens in Jaffna in May 1984 invoked leftist rhetoric in their public statements. Finally, Tamil-speaking minorities are politically active in several countries—Singapore, Canada, Malaysia, and the United States—and might attempt to bring political pressure to bear against the United States as well as Sri Lanka in international forums. [redacted]

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Ironically, both the Tamil and Sinhalese communities seek to control the harbor at Trincomalee because they believe that the port will provide a bargaining chip in dealing with the United States. Despite repeated denials by prominent US officials, both the Tamil and Sinhala press have frequently reported that the United States wants to use Trincomalee as a naval station. [redacted]

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Implications for the United States

Jayewardene has been trying to embroil the United States in Sri Lanka's affairs. During last summer's riots Colombo requested US security assistance, including weapons, small river craft, and advisers. (Some of these weapons would have been useful beyond immediate internal security needs.) According to the US Embassy, the initial request has been

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Appendix B

The Sri Lankan Military

The Sri Lankan military is plagued with mismanagement, favoritism, and other administrative problems. Although the Army has not been involved in political affairs to the extent evident in other parts of the Third World, scholarly studies reveal a history of inept coup planning by the military. Political maneuvering by members of the government to assure control of the armed forces has sapped morale and commitment. Initial appointment to all branches is dependent upon patronage by a member of Parliament, and all subsequent opportunities for training, advancement, and other perquisites are as much a function of political alliances as talent and achievement.

The military is overwhelmingly Sinhalese, a factor that seriously hinders the military's ability to deal with ethnic affairs. Indeed, soldiers participated in the Colombo riots of July 1983. The President—who is also Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces—has not disciplined soldiers found guilty of reprisal raids against Tamil civilians.

We believe the military's repressive tactics have further radicalized the Tamil citizenry and destroyed any rapport that might have existed between Colombo and the Tamil population. According to press accounts, Sinhalese soldiers pulled Tamil youths off buses at random and executed them beside the road at several places in Jaffna during April 1984. During that same month, Sinhalese soldiers opened fire on a crowd of women and children in a crowded market outside Jaffna, wounding and killing more than 20 civilians. Although the Army has claimed that such incidents are necessary to maintain control over a hostile population that supports the militant Tamil insurgents, we believe these reprisals illustrate the failure of Colombo to control the military and use it effectively.

Understaffed and ill equipped, we judge that the Sri Lankan forces will be hard pressed to cope with increasing Tamil separatist attacks in the north. Even given the strategic advantages of home terrain, population sympathy, and perhaps even initial numerical advantage, the Sri Lankan forces are no match for an invasion by a modern force.



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