



Tamil Tigers



Dear Delegates,

Hello, and welcome to the Tamil Tigers committees. My name is Sahir Zaveri and I will be your Crisis Director. I am a sophomore from Mumbai, India here at Brown University concentrating in Applied Math and Political Science.

The topic of the LTTE has always been of great interest to me and I hope that by the end of the conference each and every delegate participating in this crisis will share the enthusiasm I have for this topic. The LTTE has proved to be one of the most important and consequential non-state actors in recent South East Asian history. I feel this issue is especially important as we see the rising importance of non-state actors on the world stage. I believe that understanding the inner workings of such a situation will provide valuable insight for all delegates into the impact that an organization like the LTTE can have and how different nations chose to react to such organizations.

I realize that many of the delegates may not have an in depth background of the issue, which is why I have attempted to provide a comprehensive, but un-biased view of the entire topic. I will of course be happy to respond to any questions that delegates may have in the lead up to the conference.

I would just like to end by welcoming all of you to BUCS 2012. I hope you have an enjoyable and memorable experience!

Sincerely,
Sahir Zaveri
tamil_tigers@browncrisis.org

Background

The History of Sri Lanka: From Conception to Independence

Sri Lanka, officially known today as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, has roots dating back to the fifth century B.C when Indo-Aryan migrants from North India settled on the island. This group of people is known today as the Sinhalese. In the following centuries, this ethnic group would emerge as the most powerful sect. Two hundred years later, Dravidians from the south east coast of the Indian peninsula started migrating to the northern regions of Sri Lanka. These people, known as the Tamils, went on to form the largest minority in the region. Both the Sinhalese and Tamils were originally Hindu. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries B.C.E, however, Buddhism spread from India to the island, where it was adopted by the Sinhalese. From this period till the early 16th century, Sri Lanka was divided into kingdoms, Tamil in the North and North East, Sinhalese in the other regions.

In 1505 the Portuguese arrived in Colombo and over time took control over a number of territories. This marked the beginning of European colonization of Sri Lanka. The Europeans were mainly interested in Sri Lanka because it formed a strategic link between West Asia and South East Asia. The Sri Lankans, in an attempt to push the Portuguese from power, appealed to the Dutch for help. The Dutch, in turn, saw the strategic importance of the Sri Lanka, and, following victory over the Portuguese in 1658 took control over the entire Island, except the center, Kandy. In the Late 18th to early 19th century the Sri Lankans repeated their mistake, and requested the British to aid them in removing the Dutch. This time however, the British were able to gain control of the entire island, including Kandy, making it the first time in thousands of years that the whole Island was under one ruler.

Unity under the British brought had dramatic implications. The island was administered as a single governing unit. In 1796, Sri Lanka was organized into the Crown Colony of Ceylon. This meant that regions with Tamil majorities in the north were grouped with regions of Sinhalese majority for the first time ever. These changes lead to among the first clashes between the two communities. The British initially did not grant the Sri Lankans civil rights at all initially. In the later periods of liberalization, only Sinhalese people were given positions of power, deepening ethnic divisions on the island. British rule also brought about a massive influx of Indian Tamils, who were brought in as indentured workers to labor on the coffee and tree plantations. These Indian Tamils formed a new underclass in Sri Lanka and widened the gap between the different ethnic communities.

While the rift between Tamils and Sinhalese was materializing, there a universal movement for independence began to develop. During the 1930s, the independence movement intensified as the younger generation demanded civil rights. By the time the Second World War broke out, there was already an understanding that the Sri Lanka would be granted independence. During the war, however, Sri Lanka was to form a vital base for the allied command in the Indian Ocean.

After the war, the UK lacked to resources to continue its rule and on February 4th, 1948 Sri Lanka finally won its independence as the Commonwealth of Ceylon. The first prime minister of Ceylon was Don Stephen Senayake, one of the main leaders in the independence struggle who had served in the administration of the island while it was a British Dominion.

From Independence to the Creation of the LTTE

During the years after independence, the United National Party (UNP) with D.S Sennayake as prime minister governed Ceylon. However, the UNP failed to win a clear majority in the 1947 elections and formed a coalition, which included Tamil parties. In 1949, D.S Sennayake, realizing that the relationship between the Sinhalese and the Tamils was fragile, attempted to bridge the divide between the communities by acting against a common enemy. D.S Sennayake disenfranchised the Indian Tamils who inhabited the central regions of Ceylon with strong support from both the Sinhalese and Tamil communities.

D.S Sennayake, despite being politically right wing, placed great emphasis on unity within Ceylon and successfully prevented clashes between the two dominant communities in the country. However, in 1952 he died while still in office and his son, Dudley, took over as Prime Minister. Dudley angered both Tamils and Sinhalese leaders when he brought up the sensitive issue of Ceylon's national language. Sinhalese nationalists had been trying for years to remove Tamil as an official language, while the Tamils were extremely concerned that if Tamil was removed they would be at a huge disadvantage in the terms of representation in government.

Between 1952 and 1956 the UNP lost much of its support from both Sinhalese and Tamils, following mass protests, known as the Hartal, over austerity measures which dramatically raised food prices. In 1956 the Left wing –anti Tamil- Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) came to power. The SLFP immediately tried to remove Tamil as an official language, greatly escalating tensions between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The division led to Ceylon's first large scale ethnic riots in 1958 where more than 200 Tamils were killed and thousands were displaced. In the wake of the rioting, relations between Tamils and Sinhalese continued to deteriorate. In 1959 while the national movement of the SLFP was in full swing, a Buddhist monk, who thought that the SLFP leader S.W.R.D Bandaranaike was not doing enough for the Buddhist cause, assassinated the prime minister. This incident ultimately resulted in Bandaranaike's wife, Srimavo, becoming the Prime Minister in 1960. While her policies were similar to her husband's, she followed a harder line, nationalizing almost all private sector industry. In the 1960's when the oil industry was being nationalized, ethnic tensions reached new highs. In 1963 some Tamils began to demand independence, or Eelam, the Tamil name for the island of Sri Lanka.

In 1965 the UNP came back to power riding on a wave of right wing support from the Sinhalese. However by this time the division between Tamils and Sinhalese had grown so wide that even reversing Nationalistic policies could win the UNP the Tamils support. In the late 1960s the distrust of the Sinhalese had reached a high point and many people from the new generation were joining the cry for Tamil Eelam. By the end of the 1960s the Sinhalese had restored faith in the SLFP and their nationalist policies, and Srimao Bandaranaike returned to power as prime minister of Ceylon in 1970. In 1971 there was a Marxist uprising by the Sinhalese JVP, or People's Liberation Front,¹ which led the SLFP to pursue an even more nationalistic path. This culminated in a decision to change Ceylon from a Commonwealth of the United Kingdom to a republic, formally called the Free Sovereign and Independent Republic of Sri Lanka. This move also abolished the senate and made Sinhalese the official language. Tamil was officially designated as the second language. Even the changed name of the republic served to deepen ethnic divisions. Although Lanka was a common name used by Sinhalese and Tamils for the island, the addition of the word *Sri* made the name distinctly Sinhalese.

¹ The JVP uprising was quickly crushed, with Indian support. The revolt caused reforms to the island's military forces, which had no previous counterinsurgency experience.

The recent changes made Tamils feel extremely threatened and resulted in many small youth groups forming. These groups fought for Tamil Eelam and were not hesitant to use violence to pursue their cause. In the late 1960's however, these groups lacked sufficient funding or organization to achieve major objectives. In an attempt to better coordinate resistant, Velupillai Prabhakaran created the Tamil New Tigers (TNT), in mid 1972 integrated the various smaller militant Tamil organizations. The problem of funding was dealt with through donations from the 'tamil diaspora'. This was a large group of people of tamil origin who had emigrated from the island,, often to western countries like the USA, UK and Canada. Many of these Tamils, driven by obligation to their homeland, were extremely wealthy. The cash flow into such organizations was significant. The TNT originally carried out small-scale attacks against the government and against the Sinhalese people. These attacks included the bombings of a rally in Jaffna, a tamil-majority province, which the prime minister was visiting, and of a carnival in Duruapph Stadium.

In 1974, the violence escalated dramatically. The Sinhalese majority government provoked all out calls for Tamil Eelam when in early January, at a conference was held in Jaffna where policemen opened fire on unarmed civilians who were crowded to watch a prize distribution ceremony. This gunfire lead to the fall of an electricity line, which electrocuted 7. 2 other civilians were killed and more than 50 people were injured. After this incident the President, rather than condemning the policemen involved supported them. This lead to an out cry from the Tamil community and impeded the newly formed separatist organizations further consolidating their efforts. However, it was not until mid 1970's that the TNT established itself as a significant threat to the Sri Lankan government. In 1975 Velupillai Prabhakaran shot the mayor of Jaffna Alfred Duraiyappah in the head as the Mayor was about to enter a Hindu Temple. This assassination carried out in retaliation for the Tamil mayor's backing of the SLFP, elevated the status and prestige of the TNT. The organization, along with Vellupillai Prabhakaran, was increasingly identified as the champions of Tamil Eelam.

On May 5, 1976, the Tamils New Tigers were disbanded and the Lankan Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) came into existence. The LTTE pursued a campaign of guerrilla warfare to achieve it's primary objective: an independent Tamil state, The LTTE from the outset was designed to be composed of highly trained militants whose sole purpose was to destroy any force preventing Tamil Eelam.

In the 1970's, a large number of other groups were formed to champion the Tamil cause. Each of these groups was different in terms of their ultimate aim and how they planned to achieve it. These various factions often fought for support of the Tamil youth, resulting in numerous violent clashed between the groups. However, from its conception it was quite clear that the LTTE was the superior force. The organization was the best funded and disciplined of the groups, benefiting from a constant cash-flow from the Tamil diaspora in the west. The LTTE benefitted from high quality weapons and supplies. Its strong leadership was able to clearly express its goal, independence, to the population. Prabhakaran's guidance, the organization was able to recruit a large body of dedicated fighters from among the tamil youth, and a key core of dedicated and loyal advisors. Youth fighters were so dedicated and disciplined that they would take vows of celibacy to prevent themselves from being distracted. These factors also proved invaluable in forming an insurgency capable of resisting the Sri Lankan military

In 1973 Dudley Senayake died, leaving a power vacuum in the UNP. After a brief scramble for power, Junius Richard (J.R) Jayewardene emerged as the most popular leader for the UNP. Jayewardene ushered in a new age for the UNP, which aimed at gaining grassroots support. During the same period, a new Tamil separatist political party, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was formed. Their main aim was creating a Tamil nation working within the political process.

By 1977 Jayewardene had gained significant support and easily won the parliamentary elections, following which he became Prime Minister. In the same elections the TULF captured an unprecedented number of votes elevating the party to the status of the leader of the opposition. Many believed that this might mean a new period of peace and cooperation, many Tamils, however, had strongly resolved that the only way forward was a separate state. Even during the 1977 elections Tamil youths rioted for independence. These protests undermined the TULF's success and made it clear that violence would soon escalate. Soon after the elections rumors of Tamil terrorism lead to communal violence that resulted in nearly the killings of 300 Tamils. This violence was not only directed at Sri Lankan Tamils, but also at the Indian Tamil plantation workers. As the crisis deepened, lack of strong leadership within the TULF weakened its support dramatically.

Soon after the communal violence in 1977, Prime Minister Jayewardene attempted to bridge the divide between Sinhalese and Tamils by reforming the Constitution for the second time in the nations' history. This time the government was directly modeled on the French governing system, with a directly elected president who had the power to appoint the Prime Minister and preside over the Cabinet. Consequently, Jayewardene was elected the first President of Sri Lanka, with direct oversight of the ministry of defense, and the State Intelligence Service. President Jayewardene also reformed many of the anti-Tamil laws that Mrs. Bandaranaike had instated and accused her of misusing power while in office. The result was the introduction of Tamil as a national language and the removal of unfair laws, which favored the Sinhalese. However, despite the best efforts of the ruling UNP and the TULF, levels of violence remained high. The Tamil Tigers were growing stronger, and their campaign grew more destructive. In response, the UNP passed the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act in 1979, which legalized preventive detention.

Over the next 2 years, the TULF's influence continued to decline. Tensions increased as Tamils turned to more extreme measures to gain independence. In July 1983, known as Black July, the nation saw the bloodiest rioting in its history. The riots were sparked when a group of LTTE members in the north ambushed and killed 13 Sinhalese soldiers who they accused of killing 60 Tamil civilians in Jaffna. In reaction to this, Sinhalese across the country, especially in Colombo, started using voting lists to target Tamil civilians and businesses. Almost 3000 Tamils were killed, 18000 Tamil's homes were destroyed and over 5000 Tamil owned shops were destroyed. The Tamil's became so afraid that more than 150,000 of them fled from Sri Lanka while almost 30,000 of them fled to Tamil Nadu in India. These people added to the Tamil Diaspora, which until has always been a strong base for support of the LTTE.

It is still debated whether the Government played any role in instigating the riots, and many allege that its response to the violence after it broke out was intentionally weak. One thing is certain, however: the Sri Lankan government's reaction to the riots was decidedly Anti-Tamil. The UNP passed an amendment in August 1983 that specifically outlawed discussion of Tamil independence and, by extension, any organization that fought for Tamil Eelam. Since the TULF was created to pursue Eelam through political means, this amendment effectively made the TULF an illegal organization and all 16 members of the TULF were expelled from parliament. This meant that there was no way in which the Tamil cause could be supported except through extremist organizations like the LTTE. It is generally thought that President Jayewardene took an exceptionally hard line toward the Tamils out of fear of Sinhalese extremists.

The situation in Sri Lanka had come to a point where the international community, and especially India, felt that some sort of third party mediation was the only chance for a resolution to the crisis. Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India, offered to help Sri Lanka and the Tamils reach a solution. However, at that time the Indian Research and Analysis Wing, India's external Intelligence agency was actively arming the LTTE, training forces in camps in Tamil Nadu. This clear conflict of interest caused the Sri Lankan government to initially reject Indira Gandhi's overtures. However, the persistence of bloodshed lead Indira Gandhi to send Gopalaswamy Parthasarathy to Colombo to negotiate some sort of compromise. This lead to an All Party Conference in 1984. The effort was a failure The TULF refused to participate and the Sri Lankan Government refused to grant even semi-autonomy to the northern regions.

The time-period starting after the riots in 1983 until 1987 is called Eelam War I and is marked by continuing escalation of violence between the government and the LTTE and numerous failed peace talks involving India. In 1983 a new organization called the Special Task Force (STF) was created by Lalith Athulathmudali,, the Minister of National Security. The STF was composed of 5000 elite commandos who, apart from fighting the LTTE in the North, were tasked with intercepting ships from Tamil Nadu coming to Sri Lanka, which carried arms and militants to the island. The creation of the STF was followed by the UNP government passing Emergency resolution 18A, a resolution legalizing the disposal of bodies without an autopsy. This effectively legalized extra-judicial killings and left Sri Lanka in a state of lawlessness.

The next effort at mediation was the Thimpu Talks of 1985. The Indian government was constantly under pressure from India's large Tamil population to find a solution to the Sri Lankan civil war, and tried to hold talks in Thimpu, Nepal between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamils. India was once again unsuccessful in helping the two parties agree to its proposed solution, which would have granted the northeastern provinces of Sri Lanka autonomous provincial governments.

The failure of the Thimpu Talks did not end Indian involvement in the crisis. Soon after the end of the talks, the Dehli Accord of August 1985 took place. This time, the Indian mediators were pushing the key point introducing a provincial system, as opposed to an independent government, in the North East of Sri Lanka. The UNP and most Tamil parties even agreed to that measure and it finally seemed like a solution was in sight. The LTTE however, still stood strongly against this idea as they were not willing to accept anything less than the creation of a larger single territorial unit composed of both northern and eastern states. By this time the LTTE had grown so large and powerful that their resistance alone was enough to end talks without a solution being reached.

The next step was the Dehli Accords of 1987 in which the main sticking point was the proposed creation of an amalgamated northeastern province. The Sri Lankan Government was adamantly against this because the demography of the Eastern regions was such that in some places Tamils actually formed a minority of 30 to 40 percent. It is in the backdrop of the Dehli Accords of 1987 that these two committees will meet.

Committees

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Central Governing Committee: The LTTE was a separatist group in Sri Lanka, which was formed in 1976.

- **Velupillai Prabhakaran:** LTTE Chief
- **Charles Anthony:** Air Tigers Chief
- **Thillaiyampalam Sivanesan a.k.a Soosai:** Sea Tigers Chief
- **Balasegaram Kandiah a.k.a Balraj:** Elite Fighting Wing Chief
- **Pottu Amman:** Black Tigers and Intelligence group Chief
- **Basheer Kaka:** Tiger Cub s Chief
- **Veerakathy Manivannam:** International Secretariat
- **A.K Verma:** Secretary of India's secret service agency RAW

Sri Lankan Cabinet 1987

- **Junius Richard Jayewardene:** President of Sri Lanka
- **Ranasinghe Premadasa:** Prime Minister of Sri Lanka
- **Abdul Cader Shahul Hameed:** Minister of External Affairs
- **Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defense**
- **Chief of the Defense Staff**
- **Inspector General of Police**
- **Minister of Justice and Law Reforms.**
- **Minister of Post and Telecommunication**
- **Minister of Economic Development**
- **Kunwar Natwar Singh:** Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs (Indian Delegation)

Main Issues

- The involvement of Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF)
- Potential attacks by LTTE in India and in Sri Lanka
- The creation of an amalgamated North Eastern province in Sri Lanka