

Sri Lanka:

A Risk Assessment Brief

Alexandra Clark, Jennifer Erickson and Kevin McMahon

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Based on the CIFP Risk Assessment Methodology

Conflict Background:

Since 1983, Sri Lanka has been the site of a protracted civil war between government forces and Tamil insurgents known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In response to perceived political repression by the Sinhalese-dominated government, members of the LTTE want to create their own state in the northeast, home to the majority of the island's Tamil population. Despite occasional lulls in the level of violence, the conflict has thus far claimed the lives of over 74 000 and forced almost 135 000 to seek refuge in India.

In 2002, Norway brokered a ceasefire in which the LTTE moderated its demand from political sovereignty to local autonomy. The subsequent peace-talks broke down in April 2003, although the relative absence of armed hostilities suggests that both sides remain committed to the ceasefire.

The ongoing conflict represents the leading obstacle to what otherwise should be a rapidly growing economy. Sri Lanka is rich in natural resources and has the potential to be a major exporter of rice, rubber, and textiles. Even though the current pause in fighting has allowed some industries to prosper, the possibility that violence could erupt at any time continues to stifle meaningful confidence from foreign investors. The conflict also prevents the government from effectively implementing poverty reduction programs.

The tsunami that struck the island on December 26, 2004 compounded all of the foregoing. At the time of writing, 6 000 are still missing, 100 000 thousand families are homeless, and nearly 30 000 are dead. The fishing and tourism industries were among the hardest hit, bearing costs of \$118 000 and \$250 million respectively.

	<p>Timeline:</p> <p>1948: Ceylon gains full independence from Great Britain.</p> <p>1956: Sinhala made sole official language and other measures introduced to bolster Sinhalese and Buddhist feeling.</p> <p>1972: Ceylon changes its name to Sri Lanka; Buddhism given primary place as country's religion, further antagonising Tamil minority.</p> <p>1976: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) formed as tensions increase in Tamil-dominated areas of north and east.</p> <p>1983: 13 soldiers killed in LTTE ambush, sparking anti-Tamil riots leading to the deaths of an estimated several hundred Tamils. Conflict develops in North of island between army and LTTE.</p> <p>1985: First attempts at peace talks between government and LTTE fails.</p> <p>1987: Government signs accords creating new councils for Tamil areas in north and east and reaches agreement with India on deployment of Indian peacekeeping force.</p> <p>1988: Left-wing and nationalist Sinhalese JVP begins campaign against Indo-Sri Lanka government.</p> <p>1989: 60 000 lives lost in effort to quell JVP insurgency.</p> <p>1994: President Kumaratunga comes to power pledging to end war. Peace talks open with LTTE.</p> <p>1996: State of emergency extended across the country after LTTE bombs capital, Colombo.</p> <p>1999: President Kumaratunga is wounded in a bomb attack. She is re-elected president.</p> <p>2000: Norway says it will act as an intermediary in peace push.</p> <p>2002: Government and LTTE sign a permanent ceasefire agreement; the peace initiative is sponsored by Norway.</p> <p>2002: Government lifts ban on LTTE and rebels drop demand for separate state.</p> <p>2003: LTTE suspends participation in peace talks, saying they are being marginalised.</p> <p>2004: Suicide bomb blast in Colombo raises fear for the fragile peace process.</p> <p>(adapted from http://news.bbc.co.uk)</p>
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Indicators:

History of Armed Conflict

Stabilizing Factors	Destabilizing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since the February 2002 ceasefire agreement, annual conflict deaths have drastically reduced. Fatalities in 2001 numbered >6000, reducing to <2000 in 2002 and <100 in 2003.¹ ▪ In June 2003, a number of International donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since the first major outbreak of violence in 1983, set off by the LTTE killing of 13 Sinhalese soldiers, Sri Lanka has experienced decades of persistent conflict (albeit of varying intensity). More than 74,000 deaths have resulted.⁴ ▪ The period between independence (1948) and the current insurgency (1983) was punctuated by Sinhalese-Tamil riots, including major incidents in 1956 and 1981, indicating a protracted history of violent ethnic conflict.⁵ ▪ The JVP (an ultra-nationalist, anti-LTTE, leftist Sinhalese group), beginning in 1987, waged a violent intimidation campaign in the south against the GOSL plan to work with India to quell the Tamil insurgence.⁶ This insurgency was crushed by the army in 1990, and cost 60,000 lives.⁷ ▪ Despite the current ceasefire with the Sri Lankan government, LTTE political killings of rival Tamils and

<p>pledged US \$4.5 billion partially for post-war reconstruction.²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) shrank by approximately 50% from the time of the 2002 ceasefire agreement to 2004.³ 	<p>journalists intensified in 2004.⁸ Karuna, a Tiger commander, orchestrated a split in March of 2004 that precipitated violence and the targeting of his supporters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A suicide bomb blast in July 2004, the first since the July 2001 airport attack which killed 14, indicates that the ceasefire may not be stable. ▪ As of June 2004, 134,521 conflict refugees were living abroad, the majority in India.⁹ ▪ This conflict has produced massive numbers of IDPs, and reached a high in 1995 of over 1 million. As of October 2004, Sri Lanka had a total of 350,000 still displaced.¹⁰ ▪ In 1990, the LTTE expelled all Muslims living under their control in the north. As of 2001, approximately 52,000 of these displaced Muslims were living in camps/temporary sites in Puttalam.¹¹ ▪ The latest CIPF score for History of Armed Conflict is a very high 9.07.¹²
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Governance and Political Instability

Stabilizing Factors	Destabilizing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elections are held regularly, are open to multiple parties and are governed by fair electoral laws.¹³ ▪ A vibrant media and civil society sectors ensure the state remains accountable.¹⁴ ▪ President Kumaratunga has been in office since 1994. ▪ The state recognizes and generally respects the right to freedom of association.¹⁵ ▪ Direct state censorship of the media ceased in 2001 with the repeal of emergency regulations governing the coverage of the Civil War.¹⁶ ▪ Because President Kumaratunga cannot run for presidency in 2005, UNP leader Wickramasinghe, who is willing to accept the LTTE's Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) proposal and resume talks, stands a good chance of being elected.¹⁷ ▪ Many factors, such as promised development aid, international opinion, strict U.S. anti-terrorism stance and war-weary Tamil IDPs, may prevent LTTE from resorting to violent actions.¹⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Although the constitution clearly meant for the President and the Prime Minister to be of the same party, since 2001 they are from different parties, leading to serious cohabitation strains and a political standoff.¹⁹ ▪ The presidential party itself (UPFA) is a coalition of the JVP and Kumaratunga's SLFP, preventing peace talks from progressing, as the JVP is unwilling to concede to the demands of LTTE. ▪ The President has the constitutional right to dissolve parliament for any reason at any time, affecting the latter's ability to be a strong and effective negotiator that can follow through on its promises.²⁰ ▪ The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) allows security personnel to arrest and detain suspects indefinitely without court approval and confessions obtained under any means (including the use of torture) are admissible.²¹ ▪ Politicians can appoint public servants at all levels of the bureaucracy, encouraging networks of patronage and nepotism.²² ▪ Sri Lanka has not endorsed the ADB-OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific, as have many of its neighbours. ▪ Public opinion perceives that politicians and their associates appropriate a significant proportion of aid received by Sri Lanka. ▪ The LTTE refuses to allow elections, freedom of association or freedom of expression in areas under its control. ▪ The LTTE uses coercion to force civilians to attend pro-LTTE rallies. ▪ In areas under LTTE control, critical civic groups are severely repressed and intimidated.

Militarization

Stabilizing Factors	Destabilizing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The destruction in physical infrastructure caused by the tsunami has weakened the LTTE's ability to carry out offensive operations.²³ ▪ The LTTE's preoccupation with post-tsunami relief work has diverted attention and resources away from its armed campaign against the government.²⁴ ▪ If government-LTTE hostilities resume, the government's access to foreign helicopters conducting relief operations would allow it to expand its strategic airlift capacity.²⁵ ▪ The involvement of foreign naval ships (particularly those from India) in facilitating relief work obstructs LTTE maritime operations.²⁶ ▪ The arrival of a U.S. marine survey team to the southwest town of Galle²⁷ along with the presence USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier battle group of the coast of Sumatra is likely to have a stabilizing effect upon Sri Lanka's civil conflict.²⁸ ▪ Defence spending fell from a high US\$573 million in 2000 to US\$474 million in 2003.²⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since the February 2002 ceasefire, the LTTE has recruited thousands of child soldiers for routine operations as well as suicide missions³⁰, a practice that has been made easier by the increase in the number of orphans created by the tsunami.³¹ ▪ Armed skirmishes between government and LTTE naval forces show no signs of abatement.³² ▪ The LTTE continues to enhance its fighting capabilities through the enrolment and training of new recruits.³³ ▪ The LTTE has taken advantage of the peace process to build up its armaments.³⁴ ▪ The 'Sea Tigers', the naval arm of the LTTE, has recently proven itself as a formidable maritime force and is estimated to have wiped out up to fifty percent of the government's surface fleet.³⁵ ▪ The LTTE has threatened to resume hostilities if the Government does not concede it local autonomy.³⁶

Population Heterogeneity

Stabilizing Factors	Destabilizing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initial LTTE demands for a separate Tamil state were reduced in 2002 to striving for regional autonomy. ▪ In 2003, Indian/Estate Tamils, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The population of Sri Lanka is ethnically diverse: Sinhalese 74%, Tamil 18%, Moor 7%, Burgher, Malay and Vedda 1%.³⁸ ▪ Sri Lanka is also religiously diverse: Buddhists 69%, Hindus 15%, Christians 8% and Muslims 8%. Sinhalese are mainly Buddhists and Tamils mainly Hindus, though Christians are members of both groups.³⁹

<p>an akin but distinct group from the Sri Lankan Tamils (Indian Tamils were brought to Sri Lanka by the British to work on plantations), were granted the citizenship rights they were denied in 1948. Several previous agreements had granted citizenship in either Sri Lanka or India to many of these stateless Tamils, but as of 2003 there were approximately 300,000 still stateless. UNHCR worked with the GOSL to help register 200,000 of these new citizens in 10 days.³⁷</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Sri Lankan Tamils fulfill four of the factors Minorities at Risk has identified that increase risk of future rebellion: “the protracted nature of the current insurgency; the group’s territorial concentration; repression by the government; and the Tamil’s history of lost autonomy.”⁴⁰ ▪ The Tamils went from a privileged position in the bureaucracy during British colonial rule, to marginalization in the 1950s, when Sinhala was named Sri Lanka’s sole official language and Buddhism declared the state religion.⁴¹ A history of ethnic and religious discrimination, under-representation in politics, and economic restrictions on Tamil-dominated areas has aggravated the sense of grievance. ▪ This sense of discrimination has led to the formation of militant organizations, including the LTTE. ▪ The Sri Lankan Tamils are territorially concentrated in the North and East of the Island. These are the areas also most severely affected by poverty.⁴² ▪ Tamil Nadu, one of India’s southern states, is home to Tamils who have traditionally offered support to their ethnic kin in Sri Lanka, including material support for armed conflict.⁴³ ▪ The Tigers have intentionally destroyed Buddhist holy sites. ▪ A large Muslim population (roughly 1 million) lives in the Eastern part of the island, dominated by the Tamils, and they are apprehensive about their position in an autonomous LTTE-run province.⁴⁴ Considering the 1990 incident when the LTTE expelled all Muslims from the areas under their control in the north, this anxiety is justifiable.
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Demographic Stress

Stabilizing Factors	Destabilizing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sri Lanka has a relatively low urban population rate, at only 21% in 2003.⁴⁵ ▪ The ratio of the population that is under 14 exhibited a decreasing trend up to 2003, at which point it was 26.6%.⁴⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Due to a sizeable population (approximately 19.2 million) and a limited area, Sri Lanka’s population density is quite high, at 307 people per km² in 2003.⁴⁷ The population grew at a rate of 1.3% that year.⁴⁸ ▪ Unemployment rates in the North and East (Tamil areas) were respectively 13.0% and 15.9% in 2002, compared to 8.8% for Sri Lanka as a whole.⁴⁹ ▪ In 2001 in the North and East, the ratio of the population that was under 14 was 35.6% of males and 32% of females, significantly higher than that of other areas, with levels ranging from 22% to a high of 30.2%.⁵⁰ ▪ The combination of higher unemployment levels and higher youth bulge in Tamil areas suggests the danger that unemployed and frustrated youth will turn to violence.

Economic Performance

Stabilizing Factors	Destabilizing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rate of GDP growth rose from 4% in 2002 to 5.9% in 2003.⁵¹ ▪ Per capita GDP increased from US\$841 in 2001 to US\$947 in 2003.⁵² ▪ Consumer Price Index is steadily decreasing: 14.2% in 2001, 9.6% in 2002, 6.3% in 2003.⁵³ ▪ Foreign Direct Investment grew from US\$176 million in 1999 to \$241.5 million 2002.⁵⁴ ▪ The government-launched “National Poverty Alleviation Programme,” (known also as <i>Samurdhi</i>) in effect since 1995 has reduced given cash allowances to over two million poverty-stricken households.⁵⁵ ▪ Samurdhi has also boosted socio-economic conditions through initiatives such as community development programmes and practical-skills training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Between 2001 and 2003, unemployment rose from 7.9% to 8.4%. ▪ Trade as a percentage of GDP dropped from 67.7% in 1999 to 65.2% in 2002.⁵⁶ ▪ Total external debt as a percentage of GDP is growing: 60.3% in 2001, 62.4% in 2002, 64.1% in 2003.⁵⁷ ▪ Value of Sri Lankan Rupee against the U.S. dollar has decreased from 82.58 in 2000 to 99.24 in 2005.⁵⁸ ▪ The process of privatization that the Government is has implemented as part of its efforts to satisfy IMF Structural Adjustment Policies has led to the closure of hundreds of small-scale industries.⁵⁹ ▪ Privatization has reduced job-security by replacing permanent positions with contract positions.⁶⁰ ▪ Ongoing power shortages and subsequent rationing measures discourage foreign investment.⁶¹

Human Development

Stabilizing Factors	Destabilizing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sri Lanka has the highest life expectancy among countries in the WHO South Asia Region (72.5 years).⁶² ▪ Sri Lanka has the lowest infant mortality rate among countries in the WHO South Asia Region (17 p. 1000).⁶³ ▪ 94 % of population has access to safe sanitation.⁶⁴ ▪ 77 % of the population has access to improved water source.⁶⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite relatively low official rates of HIV/AIDS (less than 0.1%),⁶⁶ actual infection rates may be higher due to risk factors such as low contraceptive use, prostitution and high migration.⁶⁷ ▪ Despite available free health care services, there is inequitable distribution of health resources and facilities in different areas of the country, particularly for socially and economically marginalized segments of the population.⁶⁸ ▪ Although the cifp indicator for child labour is low, the LTTE are notorious for recruiting child soldiers, even since the ceasefire in 2002.⁶⁹

Environmental Stress

Stabilizing Factors	Destabilizing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The government has revived plans to develop a power plant now that solutions to problems such as acid rain and dust emissions have been found.⁷⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rapid deforestation is a major concern; during the 1990's, the land areas covered by trees shrunk by more than 5 %⁷¹ and the current average annual deforestation rate is -1.6 %.⁷² ▪ Available arable land is only 0.5 ha/capita.⁷³ ▪ Annual renewable fresh water resources amount to 2592 m³ per capita (the average for Asian countries excluding the Middle East is 3241 m³).⁷⁴

International Linkages

Stabilizing Factors	Destabilizing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A contingent of U.S. marines numbering in the hundreds is assisting with the reconstruction of roads and other infrastructure, as well as the delivery of food.⁷⁵ ▪ Sri Lanka pursues multilateral diplomacy through its membership in a number of organizations including the UN, WTO, IMF, Commonwealth, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).⁷⁶ ▪ Since brokering a ceasefire in February 2002, Norway continues to spearhead efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict.⁷⁷ ▪ Japan has taken an active role in calling international attention to Sri Lanka's civil conflict and loaned U.S. \$254 million in November 2004 toward this end.⁷⁸ ▪ Sri Lanka and India have arranged to establish a "Joint Working Group" to facilitate cooperation in the area of fishing.⁷⁹ ▪ Sri Lanka and India working to conclude the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement to advance economic integration.⁸⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed defence agreement between Sri Lanka and India may lay the basis for renewed violence between LTTE and government forces.⁸¹ ▪ The LTTE's contacts with illicit arms dealers in post-conflict zones such as Cambodia and Mozambique afford it access to an array of inexpensive conventional weapons.⁸² ▪ The Tamil Diaspora continues to represent a stable and substantial source of funding for LTTE operations.⁸³

Impact of tsunami:

Stabilizing	Destabilizing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Caused extensive damage to LTTE naval units, limiting offensive strikes. ▪ Created a potential basis for cooperation between the government and LTTE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Newly orphaned children are particularly vulnerable to LTTE recruitment. ▪ Hampered economic development, particularly in the fishing and tourism industries. ▪ Increased the number of IDPs (over 500 000 people have been displaced)⁸⁴

Scenarios:

Best Case Scenario

- Current government resolves its internal disputes between various parties, thus demonstrating a united stance towards negotiations with LTTE.
- Wickramasinghe (who is willing to accept the ISGA and negotiate with LTTE), the current leader of UNP opposition, is elected president thus allowing peace talks with LTTE to move forward.
- Reconstruction, development and tsunami-relief aid alleviates poverty and improves prospects in North and East.
- Tsunami leaves LTTE at a permanent military disadvantage, making political solutions to the conflict more attractive than military ones.
- LTTE makes efforts towards international legitimacy by distancing itself from acts of violence.

Worst Case Scenario

- LTTE takes full advantage of tsunami-related disorder to revitalize its fighting capacity.
- LTTE loses confidence in peace negotiations and resumes full scale operations against government.
- Armed skirmishes intensify between government and LTTE, leading the former to abandon negotiations and resort to armed force.
- Unemployment and poverty intensify in North and East.
- "Sea Tigers" establish themselves as a permanent naval force in Sri Lanka's coastal waters.

Most Likely Scenario

- Norway attempts to broker a peace agreement between the government and LTTE.
- LTTE and government continue to respect the 2002 ceasefire, despite occasional outbursts of violence.
- LTTE gradually attains regional autonomy.
- Power struggle within LTTE intensifies (between Karuna and mainstream LTTE).
- LTTE continues to recruit child soldiers.
- Unequal distribution of social services consolidates Tamil support for LTTE.

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