SRI LANKA in Perspective
An Orientation Guide

Technology Integration Division
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DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER
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CHAPTER 1: GEOGRAPHY

Introduction

Sri Lanka is a tear-shaped island in the Indian Ocean, off the southeastern tip of India. It has an area of 65,610 sq km (25,332 sq mi), slightly larger than the U.S. state of West Virginia and the Baltic States of Latvia and Lithuania.\(^1\) \(^2\)

Strategically located, straddling several important shipping lanes, Sri Lanka has long held a significant position in regional geopolitics.\(^3\) Today, China, India, and the United States are vying for leverage, to gain access to the island’s natural resources, educated workforce, and strategic ports.

Sri Lanka has a diverse landscape and is home to many native species. However, urbanization and illegal mining threaten its biodiversity.\(^4\)

Geographic Divisions and Topographic Features

The Hill Country of the Central Highlands is the most elevated and coolest region on the island. Tea cultivation is the major agricultural enterprise, and many Tamils work as tea pickers in the region. Located in the south-central part of the country, mountain forests with rich biodiversity and sacred areas distinguish the region.\(^5\) The highest peak is Pidurutalagala at 2,524 m (8,281 ft).\(^6\)

Rising slightly above sea level and filled with sparkling beaches, the island’s coastal regions are the centerpiece of the tourist industry. Although coastal regions rim the entire island, those in the south and southwest of the island are the most developed.

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The island’s plains are widespread, including the low country, the Jaffna Peninsula, and the Vanni. The low country makes up the bulk of Sri Lanka’s area and is diverse in climate and geography. The Jaffna Peninsula is the northernmost region of the island. It is low-lying (below 300 m [900 ft] in elevation), flat, and relies on water from underground aquifers. By comparison, the Vanni makes up the mainland districts of the Northern Province. It is a densely forested region that is sparsely populated, mostly by Tamils. Historically, this area served as a buffer zone between the Tamil population of the north and the Sinhala and European colonials of the south.

**Knuckles Mountains**

Named for its likeness to the knuckles of a clenched fist, the Knuckles Mountains run along a north-south axis and help to establish the northern barrier of the Central Highlands. Many crops—including tea, vegetables, and spices—are cultivated along its slopes; rice is a staple crop in the village communities of the valleys.

**Hanthana Mountains**

In the heart of the Central Highlands, the Hanthana Mountains run along the outskirts of the city of Kandy. Tea cultivation is extensive in this range, and the Ceylon Tea Museum near Kandy showcases the history of tea cultivation on the island.

**Sabaragamuwa Mountains**

Sri Pada (2,243 m or 7,359 ft) is located among the Sabaragamuwa Mountains, which form the southwest corner of the Central Highlands. Also known as Adam’s Peak, this peak is a holy site displaying a pair of sacred footprints believed by some to be either those of the Buddha, Adam, or Shiva.

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Climate

The Sri Lankan climate is tropical, hot and humid. The only exception is the Central Highlands, where the majority of the tea plantations are located and temperatures average 18°C (64°F). By comparison, the mean annual temperature in the low country and coastal areas is about 27.5°C (81.5°F). Average rainfall on the island is 186 cm (73 in). The southwest monsoons carry rain to the central, western, and southern regions from June to October, whereas the northeastern monsoons occur from December to March. The climate beckons many tourists to Sri Lanka.

Rivers and Bodies of Water

Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean is the third-largest ocean in the world and is strategically important in geopolitics and trade. Immigrants from the northwest region of the Indian subcontinent moved to Sri Lanka in antiquity, following trade routes that led through the Indian Ocean to the island, where they established the Sinhalese kingdoms. Later, emissaries and merchants from Rome, Persia, and the Arabian peninsula among others visited the island, following the same trade routes. Eventually, Europeans set up colonies on the island to exploit its strategic location and control the spice trade.

Today, Sri Lankans rely upon the ocean for its abundant food and its scenic beaches that bring in tourists from around the world. The development of the tourism industry is a central plank in the government’s post-war reconstruction plans.

Bay of Bengal

The Bay of Bengal is a northeastern arm of the Indian Ocean along Sri Lanka’s eastern coast. Many of the island’s rivers flow into the Bay of Bengal, which connects Sri Lanka to India and Bangladesh.

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Palk Bay

Palk Bay is bounded on the west by India and on the east by the coast of Sri Lanka, Mannar Island, Adam’s Bridge, and Pamban Island. This bay and its northern entrance, Palk Strait, factored prominently in the naval battles of the country’s civil war. It was frequently used by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a secessionist group, as a route for smuggling weapons and people to and from Sri Lanka.20

Palk Strait

The Palk Strait forms the northern entrance to Palk Bay and lies between the northwestern coast of Sri Lanka and the east coast of India.

Gulf of Mannar

The Gulf of Mannar is a large shallow bay between the southeastern tip of India and the west coast of Sri Lanka. It is famous for its pearls and fisheries. The low coral islands spanning Sri Lanka and India, known as either Rama’s Bridge or Adam’s Bridge, are a distinguishing feature that separate the gulf from the Palk Strait.21

Mahaweli Ganga

The Mahaweli Ganga is the longest river in Sri Lanka. It flows north through the Hatton and Kandy plateaus. Since the late 1970s, a number of hydroelectric dams have been constructed to unleash the energy potential of the river. As it flows toward Trincomalee, its drainage basin covers nearly one-fifth of the island.22

Major Cities and Population

Sri Lanka has an estimated population of 21,283,913. Only 14% of the population lives in urban areas; thus, most of its larger towns and cities have smaller populations than many other South Asian countries.23 Because the last full census was conducted in 1981 before the civil war, population figures are estimates. Although these estimates may be accurate in the south and west, which remained under government control for the duration of the conflict, it is unclear how precise the

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estimates are for regions in the north and east, where large areas were under LTTE control. Although the government conducted a new post-war census in 2011, population figures have not yet been made public. Nevertheless, the 2011 census figures are expected to reflect significant demographic changes including the resettlement of much of the north and east.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Projected Census Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombo/Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte</td>
<td>794,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negombo</td>
<td>150,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandy</td>
<td>121,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalmunai</td>
<td>106,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galle</td>
<td>95,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batticaloa</td>
<td>88,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaffna</td>
<td>78,781</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Colombo/Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte**

Located on the west coast, Colombo and Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte serve as the combined capital of the island. The latter once served as the capital of the Kingdom of Kōṭṭe and was to become the new capital of Sri Lanka in the 1980s. However, although the parliament and some other government offices were moved to the city, most remain in the port city of Colombo, where the Portuguese established their initial presence. Colombo has served as the capital since the mid-16th Century. The two capital cities are part of the larger Colombo Urban Area (including suburbs not reported above), which has a population of more than 2.1 million.

**Negombo**

Negombo lies along the west coast of Sri Lanka, about 40 km (25 mi) north of Colombo. The city was once the center of lucrative cinnamon production during the Portuguese and Dutch colonial era. A large 17th century derelict Dutch fort looks out over a large lagoon, in which a

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25 With the exception of Batticaloa and Jaffna, all city population figures are based on estimated 2007 data, as reported in Thomas Brinkhoff, “Sri Lanka: Cities,” City Population (website), 24 July 2011, http://www.citypopulation.de/SriLanka.html
26 Population figures for Batticaloa and Jaffna are based on special enumerations conducted in the north and east during the civil war and do not reflect post-war populations.
28 Population figures for Batticaloa and Jaffna are based on special enumerations conducted in the north and east during the civil war and do not reflect post-war populations.
key shrimp fishery is located. The city is home to a significant Roman Catholic population and has some of the country’s most spectacular churches, such as the Church of Our Lady of Sindratri.

Kandy

Located in the Central Highlands, Kandy was the capital of the last independent Sinhalese kingdom and today is the cultural capital of Sri Lanka. In 1988, the United Nations’ World Heritage Centre named this sacred city a World Heritage Site. The Temple of the Tooth, a Buddhist temple complex, is located in the heart of the city, along the banks of Kandy Lake. It is believed to possess the Buddha’s tooth relic. Kandy is the largest city outside the Colombo Urban Area.

Kalmunai

Kalmunai is a Muslim-majority municipality. Located along the eastern seaboard, the community was severely affected by the civil war and the 2004 tsunami. Although the city did not experience the same level of violence as other Muslim communities along the east coast, it has been the historic center of ethnic Muslim politics.

Galle

Although Galle was a port city long before the arrival of Europeans, it reached its zenith under the Dutch. Developed around a 17th century Dutch fort, which is now a World Heritage site, the

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city is one of South Asia’s best preserved examples of the fortified cities of the colonial era.\textsuperscript{42} Situated on the southwest coast approaching the island’s tip, Galle was hit hard by the 2004 South Asian tsunami. However, the Sri Lankan government and international donors have reconstructed many of the damaged properties.\textsuperscript{43}

\textit{Batticaloa}

Situated on an island off the east coast, this city is a major trading center for the region and has large Tamil and Moor (Muslim) populations. It is connected to the mainland via bridges and ferries. The city has an estimated population of 88,459.\textsuperscript{44}

\textit{Jaffna}

The northernmost major city in Sri Lanka, Jaffna was the seat of an ancient Tamil kingdom and is the cornerstone of Tamil identity on the island. It was devastated and largely depopulated during the civil war.\textsuperscript{45}

\textbf{Environmental Issues}

Since the beginning of the 20th century, deforestation has taken a serious toll on the forest cover of Sri Lanka. At the turn of the last century, 70\% of Sri Lanka was forested. By the end of the century, that figure had dropped to 21\%.\textsuperscript{46} The related problem of soil erosion has been a major concern in Sri Lanka for decades and poses a direct threat to the country’s tea plantations and tea exports.\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{flushright}
\textcopyright{} James Gordon
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With deforestation, more animals and humans are competing for space. Poaching poses a threat to wildlife populations.\textsuperscript{48} Illegal sand mining along Sri Lanka’s coasts and rivers has led to significant degradation and contributed to further loss of habitat for the island’s wildlife.\textsuperscript{49}

Increased pollution—stemming from the dumping of industrial wastes, sewage runoff, waste disposal, and other factors related to urbanization—is a major concern, especially in urban centers.\textsuperscript{50}

\textbf{Natural Hazards}

Frequent cyclones, flooding, and occasional earthquakes plague the island. Less frequent, but extremely dangerous, tornadoes and tsunamis are significant natural hazards facing Sri Lankans.\textsuperscript{51, 52}

On 26 December 2004, a massive tsunami triggered by an underwater earthquake off the coast of Indonesia ravaged coastal communities throughout much of Sri Lanka. Tens of thousands of Sri Lankans died, and an estimated 800,000 became internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of this catastrophe.\textsuperscript{53}


Chapter 1 Assessment

1. The Sri Lankan landscape is one unbroken plain, surrounded by sandy beaches.
   False
   A number of mountain ranges are found in the center of the island, including the Knuckles, the Hanthana, and the Sabaragamuwa ranges.

2. Muslims are a majority in the city of Kalmunai.
   True
   Kalmunai is the only Muslim-majority municipality in Sri Lanka and has an estimated population of about 106,000. Located along the eastern seaboard, the city has long been the center of ethnic Muslim politics.

3. Because the island is sheltered by India’s Eastern Ghats mountain range, Sri Lanka’s climate is cooler and drier than that found in other South Asian countries.
   False
   The Sri Lankan climate is tropical: hot and humid. The only exception is the Central Highlands, where the majority of the tea plantations are located. In the low country and coastal areas, the mean annual temperature is about 27.5°C (81.5°F), compared to 18°C (64.4°F) in the hill country.

4. The Colombo Urban Area is the only urban center to have a population more than 1 million.
   True
   The Colombo Urban Area has a population of around 2.1 million, and no other urban center approaches the 1 million mark.

5. The city of Jaffna is especially important to Sri Lanka’s Tamil population.
   True
   The northernmost major city in Sri Lanka, Jaffna was the seat of an ancient Tamil kingdom and is considered a cornerstone of Tamil identity on the island.
CHAPTER 2: HISTORY

Sinhalese Origin Narrative

Although debated in academia, the majority of scholars believe that the Sinhalese first landed on an island already populated by aboriginal people referred to as the Veddhah—a type of demon in Sinhalese Buddhist cosmology.\(^5\)

The Sinhalese origin legend, in the encyclopedic Pali text known as the *Mahāvamsa*, recounts the exploits of an Indo-Aryan prince, Vijaya. Banished from his homeland for gross misconduct, Vijaya—descended from a family devoted to a lion totem—leads a band of 700 followers across the Indian Ocean. The exiles landed on the northwestern coast of Sri Lanka. Taking a young yakka (Vedda) princess as his consort, Vijaya defeated the indigenous rulers and seized the island. After abandoning the local princess for a more socially acceptable bride from India, Vijaya died without an heir. Succeeded by a nephew, his people come to be known as the Sinhalese, the people of the lion.\(^5\)

The Dravidian peoples of South India, of whom the Tamils are one branch, are believed to have migrated to the island at roughly the same time as the Sinhalese. Over Sri Lanka’s history, successive waves of migration from North and South India have profoundly shaped the history and ethnic makeup of the island.\(^5\)

The Ancient Kingdom

According to Sinhalese tradition, King Panduvasdēva, the nephew and successor of Vijaya, ruled the island for 30 years, using Upatissa Grāma as the capital. Panduvasdēva had 10 sons and 1 daughter, Princess Unmāda Chithtra. After internal squabbling over the succession between these brothers and Pandukābhaya, the son of Princess Chithtra, the latter emerged victorious and named Anurādhapura as the capital in the Fourth Century B.C.E. The new king received great help in the conflict with his uncles by the Veddas. In gratitude for their service, he put many in positions of power within the newly established kingdom.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) Donald Obeyesekere, *Outlines of Ceylon History* (Colombo: The Times of Ceylon, 1911).
Repeated South Indian invasions brought greater Hindu influence that threatened the island’s budding orthodox Buddhism. A few of these invasions irrevocably altered Buddhism on the island. In the Second Century B.C.E., two Tamil horse traders, Sena and Guttika, defeated the Sinhala king, Sūratissa, and ruled Anurādhapura from 237–215 B.C.E.\(^{58}\) Only a few decades earlier, Indian monks had converted the island’s population to Buddhism.\(^{59}\)

Another invasion that brought dramatic change to the island was that of Eḷāra (101–77 B.C.E.), who came from Chola in present-day Tamil Nadu. Eḷāra, who seized the Sinhala kingdom by defeating Asela, ruled Sri Lanka for 44 years. Even the Sinhalese traditionally represent Eḷāra as a just king. According to the Mahāvamsa, a Fifth Century C.E. chronicle, Eḷāra ruled justly in settling disputes with friend and foe alike. He ordered the execution of his own son because of a heinous religious crime committed against the Buddhists.\(^{60, 61}\) Afterwards, more than a dozen invasions from South India led the Sinhala kings to relocate their capital to the more strategically defensible position of Poḷonnaruwa.\(^{62}\)

**Medieval Invasions and Social Integration**

The Kingdom of Poḷonnaruwa prevailed during the reigns of King Parākramabāhu I (1123–1186) and his immediate successor, Nissaṇka Malla I (1186–1196), all other Poḷonnaruwa rulers were weak and prone to infighting.\(^{63}\)

Although the kings had moved the royal seat to Poḷonnaruwa thinking it was more defensible, South Indian invasions continued. Kalinga Māgha led an invasion from the east coast of India in 1214 and ruled over the Poḷonnaruwa kingdom from 1215 to 1236. During this occupation, the Sinhala civilization was faced with being incorporated into the political, military, and socio-economic system of the more powerful Dravidian kingdoms of India. Māgha’s forces consisted largely of South Indian mercenaries. Māgha ruled the ancient northern kingdom, Vijayabāhu III established a separate Sinhalese kingdom in Dambadeniya, from which he launched attacks against Māgha and eventually defeated him.\(^{64, 65}\)

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\(^{60}\) *Mahāvamsa*, II.XXI.

\(^{61}\) *Mahāvamsa*, II.XXI.16–19.


The next major invasion came from a less likely source. On two separate occasions, in 1247 and 1270, Candrabhānu, the King of Tambralinga (in modern-day Thailand), invaded Sri Lanka. His goal was to acquire the Dantha Dāthu, the Buddha’s tooth relic. The Sinhalese were able to repel the invaders with the aid of South Indian allies. The invasions created a new relationship with Southeast Asia. Moreover, the Dambadeniya kingdom proved to be too weak to force their South Indian allies to return to India. Thus, a Tamil king was installed in Jaffna, which gradually became an independent kingdom. The Sinhalese capital was temporarily shifted to Yāpahuwa, before returning to Poḷonnaruwa about half a century later. During the two centuries following the invasion, the Sinhalese gradually abandoned the northern plains, previously the center of their civilization. They settled in the southwestern and central regions. The Tamils, who had been coming to the island as peaceful settlers, and in times of war as soldiers and invaders, established themselves in the north. Other Tamils settled in the south and southwest and were integrated into Sinhala society.

**Early Modern**

During the early 15th Century, Parākramabāhu VI, the founder of the Kingdom of Kōṭṭe, established control over the entire island from his capital in western Sri Lanka. During this time, the island was united under one king for the first time in centuries. However, by 1467, the Jaffna Kingdom, which had been created by the South Indian invaders in the early 13th Century, proclaimed its independence, having been governed by the Kōṭṭe throne only 17 years.

In 1521, in a palace coup d'état known as the Vijayabā Kollaya, Vijayabāhu VI of Kōṭṭe was murdered by his three eldest sons. They feared they would be overlooked for succession to the throne in favor of their father’s fourth son, Dēvarāja. The eldest succeeded their murdered father to the Kōṭṭe throne as Buvanekabahu VII, while the other two created separate kingdoms for themselves from the carcass of the once mighty Kōṭṭe — Māyādunnē ruled from Sītāwaka and Parārājasimha established the Kingdom of Raigama. With this fragmentation of power, the Kingdom of Kandy gained further autonomy, because it was effectively outside of the control of any of these three successor states.

For the remainder of the 16th Century, the monarchs of Kōṭṭe and Sītāwaka battled for control of the island. Unable to win decisively, both sides enlisted the help of foreign allies. The kings of

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Sītāwaka looked to Muslim powers of India; whereas, the Kōṭṭe rulers turned to the Portuguese, ushering in the colonial era.\footnote{Paulus Edward Pieris, \textit{Ceylon and the Portuguese, 1505–1658}, reprint (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1999).}

**Colonial Domination**

Like most island nations, Sri Lanka has been invaded throughout its history. Most of these invasions originated from the South Indian kingdoms. Although these invasions ended in the colonial era, the impact of European conquerors on Sri Lankan culture has been more profound and enduring. During centuries of European domination, the island emerged from isolation to join the international arena.

**Portuguese**

In 1505, the first Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka. Within ten years, a sizable fleet of Portuguese ships landed at Colombo, and construction began on a fort. By 1619 the Portuguese had conquered the territory, which was annexed to their southern holdings.\footnote{Manus I. Midlarsky, \textit{Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 200.}

The history of Portuguese colonialism in Sri Lanka was bloody and acrimonious from the beginning. Initially invited by the King of Kōṭṭe to fend off his rivals, they overstayed their welcome, and eventually seized full control of the kingdom. The Portuguese set out not only to conquer the territory but also the souls of the island’s indigenous peoples. Forced conversions, the destruction of religious buildings and artifacts, and the murder of the priesthood were Portuguese policy. Although these tactics won them territory and some allies among the ruling class, they also created a deep-seated animosity against the Portuguese.\footnote{K.W. Goonewardena, “Dutch Policy towards Buddhism in Sri Lanka,” in \textit{The Sri Lanka Reader: History Culture, Politics}, ed. John Clifford Holt (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 226.} \footnote{K.M. de Silva, \textit{A History of Sri Lanka} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 128.}

Dutch

In 1658, the Dutch replaced the Portuguese as the colonial power in Sri Lanka. Only the Sinhalese kingdom of Kandy remained independent. The Dutch brought many South Indian laborers and mercenaries, some of whom married into Tamil and Sinhalese families. Others mixed with Muslims (called Moors by Sri Lankans) on the island. 77

Early on, the Dutch focused on the coasts and the ports associated with international trade. The island’s interior remained under the control of the Sinhalese Kandyan Kingdom. The Dutch intended to make the Kandyan Kingdom a landlocked state, forced to rely on the Dutch for all contact with the outside world. Rājasimha II was aware of Dutch designs, and as early as 1660, contacted the English, hoping again to play one European power against another. These overtures, however, would not bear fruit for nearly a century and a half. 78

With the death of Śrī Vēra Parākrama Narendra Simha in late 1739, the Sinhalese dynasty ended. He was succeeded by Śrī Vijaya Rājasimha, also known as Rājasimha III, a brother of the late king’s South Indian wife, a princess of the Nāyakkar dynasty. 79 Thereafter, the chief queens of all the subsequent kings were brought from South India. Although these kings appeared to be Sinhalese Buddhist monarchs, having adopted Sinhala names and the Buddhist faith, actually, they were ardent Hindus and South Indians. 80

As the Kandyan Kingdom declined, the Dutch made inroads into the interior of the island. Frequent battles between the Dutch and the Kandyans shifted territory between them a few times, but the Dutch steadily eroded the power of the Kandyan kings. However, wars and revolutions in Europe, in which the Dutch were handily defeated, led to their demise in Sri Lanka. 81, 82, 83

British

On 16 February 1796, the last of the Dutch forces in Sri Lanka were defeated by a joint Anglo-Kandyan army. Although the Kandyans had expected to extend their power as the last independent indigenous kingdom, they were betrayed. By 1815, the entire island surrendered to British authority.

Beginning in the 1830s, the British sold parcels of land in the central highlands at cheap prices to British nationals. They encouraged the development of an economy based on plantation agriculture. Coffee, tea, rubber, and coconuts became the colony’s principle exports. When local Sinhalese refused to work on the plantations, the British brought in large numbers of Tamils from South India to work as migrant laborers. They came to be known as Estate (or Indian) Tamils. Many laborers died of disease while being transported to Sri Lanka. After clearing the forest for agriculture, Tamils lived on the plantations separate from the native Sinhalese.

Before winning the right to vote in 1931, the Tamils had not seen themselves as a minority but rather as a community on the island. This perception explains, in part, why the Tamil Congress’ demand for equal representation for minorities did not appear unreasonable to the members of the pre-independence political party. The Tamils made up only about 20% of the population. The key factor behind the growing ethnic conflict was a disagreement between the ethnic groups over the political structure of an independent Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese preferred a unitary state while the major Tamil party demanded a federal state. The Sinhalese majority perceived the Tamil’s demand for a federal government as a bid for independence.

20th Century

Independence

On 4 February 1948, the United Kingdom granted Sri Lanka independence. As they had in India, the British colonialists left behind a tense situation on the verge of violence and upheaval. Following independence, the government withheld citizenship and voting rights from the Estate Tamils (Tamils brought by the British to work the plantations). Though opposition lawmakers were cautious of the measures, many Tamil leaders were persuaded to support the legislation.

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The majority of Sinhalese and many Sri Lankan Tamils, those descended from the Tamils of the old Jaffna kingdom, did not view the Indian Tamils as citizens of an independent Sri Lanka.\textsuperscript{90, 91}

In 1956, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and their leftist allies came to power. The new government passed nationalist and socialist reforms that staunchly supported Sinhalese and Buddhist cultural dominance. Among the most controversial was the 1956 Official Language Act that made Sinhala the official language of the country. The law sparked opposition throughout the Tamil community, and a struggle to secure equal status for the Tamil language. Simultaneously, Tamil secessionist organizations emerged.\textsuperscript{92}

In September 1959, amid this unrest, a disenchanted Buddhist monk from the left assassinated Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. Gaining access to Bandaranaike was easy, as Buddhist monks were routinely granted audiences with the prime minister. The fallen prime minister’s widow, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, succeeded him as the leader of the SLFP. The 1960 elections solidified the SLFP’s power, and Mrs. Bandaranaike became Prime Minister and the first female Prime Minister in the world.\textsuperscript{93}

In 1972, the government ratified a new constitution; it became a republic now called Sri Lanka. However, the Tamils complained that the change did not address their concerns and worried that it had made Buddhism an official state religion.\textsuperscript{94}

Bandaranaike intensified the SLFP’s socialist reforms and promoted a stronger pro-Buddhist policy. The use of Sinhala as the official language of government was speedily implemented. In response, over the next decade, representatives of the Tamils led protests against the government’s policies. Having survived repeated assassination attempts, Bandaranaike declared a state of emergency in August 1981, and severe restrictions were placed on all dissident groups.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{90} Valli Kanapathipillai, 	extit{Citizenship and Statelessness in Sri Lanka: The Case of the Tamil Estate Workers} (London: Anthem Press, 2009), 52.
\textsuperscript{91} A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, 	extit{Electoral Politics in an Emergent State: The Ceylon General Election of May 1970} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8.
\textsuperscript{92} Asoka Bandarage, 	extit{The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy} (New York: Routledge, 2009), 50–52.
Civil War

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Tamil secessionist movements gathered steam, especially the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In August 1983, amid an increase in communal violence, Sinhalese rioters killed a number of Tamils and destroyed Tamil properties in response to LTTE attacks. More than 100,000 Tamils fled as refugees to the neighboring Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The LTTE launched a guerrilla war, violently attacking Sinhalese and Muslim (Moor) civilians as well as military targets and moderate Tamil politicians.96

For 26 years, Sri Lanka was devastated by a bitter ethnic civil war. From 1987 to 1990, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi intervened in the conflict, sending several thousand Indian troops under the auspices of the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) to disarm the LTTE. It was a complete debacle.97

In reaction to Indian involvement, a nationalist insurrection, led by the Marxist inspired Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), erupted in 1987. Before the government was able to squelch this movement in 1989, tens of thousands were killed in terrorist attacks and government reprisals. This greatly distracted government forces from the civil war.98, 99

Shortly following the withdrawal of Indian troops in 1990, a LTTE assassin killed Gandhi. In 1993, another LTTE operative assassinated Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa.100, 101

Repeated efforts to reach a permanent ceasefire were thwarted. The LTTE used the ceasefires as an opportunity to rearm before renewing their attacks. Among Tamil exiles in Europe, North America, and Oceania, LTTE operatives solicited funds from Sri Lankans who had fled the conflict, threatening harm to family in Sri Lanka if they didn’t contribute.102 These funds

financed their operations, including a sophisticated propaganda program and advanced weaponry.\(^{103, 104}\)

During the same period, the LTTE also trained with many of the terrorist organizations throughout Asia, including the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Moro Islamic Front, and elements that would form the nucleus of al-Qaeda. The LTTE continued to traffic weapons, personnel, and drugs for these organizations until its demise.\(^{105}\)

**Recent Events**

**Conclusion of the Civil War**

In 2004, the commander of LTTE forces in eastern Sri Lanka, Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan (known at the time as Colonel Karuna), split with the group’s leadership and began a dialog with the government. This removed eastern Sri Lanka from combat and significantly reduced LTTE’s resources.\(^{106}\) That same year, a massive tsunami devastated coastal communities throughout the Indian Ocean, including Sri Lanka.\(^{107}\)

In 2005, Sri Lankan voters withdrew their support for the party responsible for signing the 2002 ceasefire, bringing Mahinda Rajapaksa to power on a hard-line platform to renegotiate the ceasefire in favor of the government.\(^{108}\) After repeated LTTE violations of the 2002 ceasefire agreement, the Rajapaksa government launched a massive campaign in 2006. By the middle of May 2009, the Sri Lankan Army had regained control of all rebel-held territory, and the senior leadership of the LTTE, including its founder, Velupillai Prabhakaran, were killed or captured. At the end of the civil war, the estimated death toll from the conflict stood at 80,000–100,000.\(^{109}\)

**Post-war Developments**

Since the conclusion of the war, the government of Sri Lanka has faced the daunting task of rebuilding the north and east of the country, where the greatest number of Tamils live. The

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\(^{109}\) Bharatha Mallawarachi, “Sri Lanka’s President Stats by His Armed Forces,” *Associated Press*, 26 May 2011, [http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hfGMMzwTLz6RJOYiwvvu3FqtmIA?docId=9f0cd1a3b054d9ca9a01df0d50c0ac](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hfGMMzwTLz6RJOYiwvvu3FqtmIA?docId=9f0cd1a3b054d9ca9a01df0d50c0ac)
government of Sri Lanka has relied heavily on foreign aid to finance reconstruction projects.\textsuperscript{110, 111}

In a televised speech to the nation shortly after the conclusion of the civil war, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa reached out to the Tamil minority, delivering his address in both Sinhala and Tamil.\textsuperscript{112}

For a country emerging from 26 years of civil war, euphoria spread through the population. Rajapaksa’s achievement in steering the army and the nation toward a final victory over the LTTE, in spite of staunch international opposition, brought him considerable acclaim at home. Yet recovery efforts have been hampered by the worldwide recession and the reservations expressed by some governments and nongovernment organizations over Rajapaksa’s commitment to addressing the concerns of the Tamil minority. Additionally, the United Nations recently released a report alleging that the Sri Lankan government committed human rights violations in the closing phases of the war, suggesting that key members of the government might stand trial for such crimes.\textsuperscript{113} The Sri Lankan government has strongly denied such accusations, which have made it reluctant to cooperate with international agencies.\textsuperscript{114}

In a May 2011 visit to Sri Lanka, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert O. Blake, Jr., who previously served as the U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka, praised the Sri Lankan government for its prompt resettlement of nearly all the internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had been held in government camps following the end of the civil war.\textsuperscript{115}

Chapter 2 Assessment

1. South Indian invaders profoundly influenced Sri Lankan history, religion, and ethnic composition.
   True
   From ancient times, repeated waves of South Indian invaders interacted with the local population—bringing Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist influences to the island.

2. Anurādhapura served as the capital of the island until the Portuguese colonized Sri Lanka.
   False
   While it was the capital throughout the ancient period of Sri Lankan history, South Indian invaders forced Sinhalese rulers to frequently move their capital from the medieval era onward.

3. Portuguese colonial rule was fairly harmonious and promoted the development of the island.
   False
   The history of Portuguese colonialism in Sri Lanka was bloody. Invited in to assist the King of Kōṭṭe fend off his rivals, they eventually seized full control of Sri Lanka.

4. The Dutch brought the entire island under their control by the early 19th Century.
   False
   While the Dutch frequently defeated the Kingdom of Kandy in recurring conflicts, they were never able to decisively conquer the Sinhalese of the interior kingdom.

5. Political violence was a central theme throughout much of Sri Lanka’s modern history.
   True
   Plagued by assassinations, communist insurgencies, coup attempts, and civil war, Sri Lanka has suffered dramatically throughout much of the 20th and 21st centuries.
CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY

Introduction

Following independence in 1948, Sri Lanka pursued an economic approach of strong central planning and self-sufficiency, which proved unsuccessful. By 1977, voters had rejected this socialist paradigm and enacted comprehensive economic reform aimed at free market capitalism, privatization, and deregulation of industry. Although three decades of civil war hampered these economic reforms, Sri Lanka maintained a surprisingly robust economy throughout the conflict.

Today, improved security has encouraged significant international investment, aid, and joint ventures. Much of this investment is being used to rebuild roads, rail, and other infrastructure destroyed during the civil war.\textsuperscript{116}

Although depressed by the global slowdown since 2008, the garment industry and other businesses within the manufacturing and service sectors have been fueling the Sri Lankan economy.\textsuperscript{117, 118} With an economy of USD 24.1 billion (2010 est.), and a per capita GDP of approximately USD 2,400, Sri Lanka has enjoyed strong growth rates in recent years.\textsuperscript{119} However, this growth (more than 9% in 2010) has been mitigated by inflation.\textsuperscript{120, 121, 122} Sri Lanka also suffers from high international debt, about USD 18 billion, and consistently runs a trade deficit.\textsuperscript{123}

Many analysts believe that fundamental reform, reconstruction, and reconciliation must transpire in order to stabilize Sri Lanka’s economy. Others point out the need for industry to diversify the country’s export base, which, in addition to the garment industry, is heavily reliant upon


\textsuperscript{120} Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, “Reconciliation Quest – Sri Lanka’s Security After the Conflict,” \textit{Jane’s Intelligence Review}, 15 July 2011, \url{http://search.janes.com/Search/printFriendlyView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/mags/jir/history/jir2011/jir11155.htm@current}


\textsuperscript{122} Jane’s Defence, “Sri Lanka: Executive Summary,” \textit{Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia}, 21 April 2011, \url{http://search.janes.com/Search/printFriendlyView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/sassu/srls010.htm@current}

agriculture.124

Agriculture

One-third of Sri Lankan workers labor in agriculture. Among the main products are rice and grains, spices, tea, rubber, fish, coconuts, and vegetables. Nearly 14% of the country’s land is arable, and roughly 15% is used for permanent crops.125 The scarcity of land has resulted in widespread sharecropping and subsistence farming.126

Given the island’s erratic weather, the agricultural sector seldom experiences much growth. Droughts and floods have devastated crops in recent years. Moreover, the 2004 tsunami wreaked havoc with Sri Lanka’s fishing fleet, which has yet to recover fully.127 Still, since the civil war’s conclusion, production has increased, and the fishing industry appears to be on the rebound. Offsetting this positive growth, however, commodity prices have declined on the global market.128

Industry

In 2010, the growth rate of Sri Lankan industrial production was estimated at 8.4% and focused on agricultural processing (tea, coconuts, rubber, etc.), the garment industry, construction, and the service sector.129 The industrial and service sectors account for more than 87% of the country’s GDP, relying heavily upon garment exports to the United States and Europe.130 Furthermore, 67.3% of the workforce is employed in the industrial and service sectors.131

The worldwide economic slowdown has adversely affected the Sri Lankan garment industry, which has seen its market share dwindle since 2009. Similar downturns have affected other export industries.132

Energy and Natural Resources

Sri Lanka produces enough electricity for domestic consumption, but the power grid is unstable, so blackouts are frequent, especially in smaller communities. Growing demand has made this much worse. Analysts point to an overreliance on hydroelectricity, which in drought years leads to a sharp decline in energy production.\(^{133, 134}\)

Although Sri Lanka has no proven oil reserves, tests in the Mannar Basin, along the island’s northwest coast, indicate a probable reserve. The government accepted bids from Indian, Chinese, and Canadian companies to develop the site. In late 2010, the government announced that it also was accepting bids for exploration of the Cauvery Basin, another site off the northwest shore.\(^{135}\) Natural gas reserves in India’s portion of the basin were discovered in 2011 holding significant promise for both countries’ energy needs.\(^{136}\)

Because of the correlation between petroleum prices and domestic inflation, the Sri Lankan government has tried to prevent fluctuations in prices by providing fuel subsidies. However, such tinkering with the commodity market has resulted in heavy financial losses for the state-operated Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC). This policy (along with mismanagement) also has concerned Western banking interests.\(^{137, 138}\)

CPC operates Sri Lanka’s sole oil refinery, near Colombo. However, firms from the United Arab Emirates are slated to build a second refinery as part of the major construction projects underway in Hambantota, the hometown of President Rajapaksa.\(^{139}\)

Sri Lanka is one of the world’s leaders in gem exports, deriving USD hundreds of millions each year from the industry. Other major mineral exports include graphite and titanium. Additionally,
significant quantities of beach and river sand are exported annually, leading to erosion and habitat loss in certain areas. 140, 141

**Trade**

Although Sri Lanka has developed close trade ties with India and Pakistan, the balance of trade with these two regional powers is strongly skewed against Sri Lanka. For example, India provides 17.5% of all Sri Lankan imports but buys 4% of the nation’s exports. Pakistan is neither a major importer nor export market for Sri Lankan goods. However, Sri Lanka has signed free-trade agreements with both of these countries, which could increase Sri Lankan trade as its economy regains its footing. 142, 143, 144, 145

**Exports**

The top five destinations of Sri Lankan exports are the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, and Belgium. Estimates for 2010 indicated that Sri Lankan exports brought in USD 8 billion, largely from the textile and garment industry, tea and spices commodities, rubber, gemstones, fish, and coconut-related products. Although tea and rubber were historically the chief exports, since the onset of the civil war the garment and tourism industries have eclipsed them. Despite the seeming diversification of its exports, the market continues to rely on a few commodities that reach limited markets. 146, 147

**Imports**

India, China, the European Union, Singapore, and Iran are Sri Lanka’s major import partners. 148 The bulk of Sri Lanka’s imports include petroleum products, machinery, and building materials, which amounted to an estimated USD 12 billion in 2010. 149, 150

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Among the most profound changes in Sri Lanka’s imports since the end of the war has been the decline in the percentage of food items and military equipment.151

Tourism

Sri Lanka has long pursued a policy of developing a sustainable tourist industry but suffered severe setbacks because of the civil war and the 2004 tsunami.152 Now that the war has concluded, the government hopes to develop tourism to the point that it could produce USD 3 billion annually by the middle of this decade. It has designated numerous areas for development as tourist zones.153 These include the World Heritage site of Sri Lanka’s “second city” Kandy, which is renowned for the Temple of the Tooth, a major Buddhist temple that attracts pilgrims and tourists alike.154 The shrines of Kataragama—a holy site for Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims located in the country’s southeast—are a major destination for domestic and international pilgrims and tourists.155

The coastal communities of the south and west additionally have long been vacation destinations popular with Westerners and the well-to-do of Sri Lanka. Colombo offers all the amenities of the world’s major metropolitan cities—with a distinctive South Asian flair. Galle and Negombo feature pristine beaches, Dutch colonial architecture, and modern conveniences. Hikkaduwa and Ambalangoda, on the southwest coast, are major attractions for those interested in Sri Lankan folk art, surfing, and snorkeling.156

The ancient sites of Anurādhapura, Yapahuwa, Poḷonnaruwa, Jaffna, and others throughout the island offer historical insight into the formation of the island’s identity. The Sri Lankan Tourist Board has helped to develop these sites.157

Banking and Finance

The official currency of the nation is the Sri Lankan rupee (LKR), which in September 2011 was trading at a 110:1 ratio with the USD. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) issues and regulates the currency and has been known to intervene when necessary to shore up its exchange rate. As such, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has classified the LKR as a managed currency, rather than independent. The CBSL oversees a number of state-owned and private financial institutions, including banks, thrift and credit cooperatives, insurance companies, and venture capital companies.

The Colombo Stock Exchange is the only stock exchange in Sri Lanka. While it is small, the exchange has proven to be an innovator among South Asian exchanges, switching to a paperless, automated system in the closing years of the 20th Century. It typically lists between 230–250 firms with a total capitalization of more than USD 6 billion. The Sri Lankan government reduced the budget deficit from 9.9% in 2009 to 8% in 2010. Moreover, credit ratings agencies have given the Sri Lankan economy positive ratings at a time when many Western economies, including the U.S. economy, are being downgraded by the same agencies.

Furthermore, many international investors are making significant investments in the Sri Lankan economy. One example is the Trinco Gateway Park, a major project aimed at renovating and expanding facilities at the port city of Trincomalee. The venture has a number of investors, including an Australian consortium. India is investing in a host of smaller projects aimed at reconstructing the war-torn north and east regions of Sri Lanka. China is another major investor.

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166 Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, “Reconciliation Quest – Sri Lanka’s Security After the Conflict,” Jane’s Intelligence Review, 15 July 2011,
contributor to post-war reconstruction projects and is bankrolling much of the development of the Hambantota, which will include a first-class deepwater port, airport, top-tier hotels, a Volkswagen manufacturing facility, and other enterprises taking advantage of the newly created free-trade zone.\textsuperscript{167, 168, 169}

**Standard of Living and Employment Trends**

In 2010, Sri Lanka ranked 93rd out of 172 countries on the United Nations Development Program’s Human Development Index (HDI), a medium human-development country. The country is within striking distance of a highly developed country. Having risen significantly each year since 1980, the country should make that list shortly.\textsuperscript{170} The HDI measures factors such as adjusted net saving, literacy, fertility rates, carbon emissions, education enrollment, health and education expenditures, gender inequality, crime rates, internet users, longevity, malnourishment, and unemployment.\textsuperscript{171}

Sri Lanka had an estimated unemployment rate of 5.8% in 2010. One-third of all workers are in agriculture. Another 26.3% are employed in the industrial sector, and the remaining 41% work in the service sector.\textsuperscript{172} This figure is somewhat misleading, however, because many Sri Lankans work abroad where they can make far more money. The government estimates more than 1 million have emigrated to work abroad.\textsuperscript{173} The per capita GDP in Sri Lanka was USD 5,000 in 2010, ranking 148th out of 228 countries (by comparison the per capita GDP in the United States was USD 47,200, ranked 11th in the world).\textsuperscript{174}

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http://search.janes.com/Search/printFriendlyView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/mags/jir/history/jir2011/jir11155.htm@current
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\textsuperscript{167} Amal Jayasinghe, “Building Booms in S. Lanka’s Tsunami Town,” AFP, 16 August 2011, http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iaiu2Pk3heBG6DG3qiM8RkKt_27w?docId=CNG.5a6cab0fcdd7e341e00101949a99e732.1d1

\textsuperscript{168} Parama Sinha Palit, “China’s Soft Power in South Asia” (working paper, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, 8 June 2010), http://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/handle/10220/6499/WP200.pdf?sequence=1


Sri Lanka actively promotes labor migration, providing pre-departure loans, training, insurance, and other services. This helps to keep the unemployment level down, increases remittances, and provides greater opportunity for socio-economic mobility.\footnote{Sridhar K. Khatri, “Chapter 10: Labor Migration, Employment, and Poverty Alleviation in South Asia,” in 

Those living in territories controlled from 1983 to 2009 by the LTTE and other Tamil militant groups suffered severe economic hardships. Many traditional occupations, such as fishing and farming, proved untenable in the war zones.\footnote{Deborah Winslow and Michael D. Woost, eds., “Articulations of Economy and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka,” in *Economy, Culture, and Civil War in Sri Lanka* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 1–27.}


**Public vs. Private Sector**

Politicians have used the Sri Lankan economy as a platform to criticize officials and to gain public office. Thus, the economic system has fluctuated between government-controlled and free market capitalism, depending upon the fortunes of the two major political parties.\footnote{John Richardson, *Paradise Poisoned: Learning about Conflict, Terrorism, and Development from Sri Lanka’s Civil Wars* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2005), 189–216.}

Since the late 1970s, Sri Lanka has pursued privatization. This trend gained full traction in the 1990s, and in 1996 the parliament passed the Public Enterprise Reform Act No. 1, which hastened the privatization of several manufacturing and trading companies, utilities, and service-sector enterprises. This trend has continued, with the government divesting itself of...
public transportation and more utilities. In 1992, recognizing its gross mismanagement of government-operated plantations, the government handed over management to 24 private companies, and in 1995, properties were sold, passing again into the hands of private companies.\textsuperscript{181} Privatization generated a great deal of revenue for the government.\textsuperscript{182, 183}

Although the relationship between the public and private sector was frequently lukewarm, because the latter feared government intervention, international non-government organizations have helped to bridge the divide, which has led to joint ventures.\textsuperscript{184}

Future Outlook

Although many of the world’s advanced economies continue to be challenged, numerous developing economies, including Sri Lanka’s, have grown throughout the global economic downturn that began in 2008. International credit rating agencies predict that the Sri Lankan economy will continue to expand, with Standard & Poor’s estimating 6.8% growth in 2011. However, the specter of inflation continues to be a major concern. High debt and interest burdens also are obstacles with which the government and private sectors must deal.\textsuperscript{185}

As internally displaced persons (IDPs) return to communities they fled during the war, another concern is pervasive disputes over properties and land ownership. If the government is able to resolve this situation peaceably, the return of IDPs could trigger positive economic growth in war-ravaged communities, which would benefit the overall economy.\textsuperscript{186, 187}

The end of the civil war has been a boon to the fishing and tourist industries, allowing for the development of coastal communities and maritime industry. Many sectors of the economy have the potential for extensive growth including tourism and corporate outsourcing from Western economies. However, the Sri Lankan private sector faces the need to diversify if it hopes to generate greater market penetration with its exports, especially during the prevailing global economic situation.

Chapter 3 Assessment

1. The majority of Sri Lankans are employed in the agricultural sector.
   **False**
   Only one-third of Sri Lankans work in the agricultural sector.

2. Gemstones are a major export product of Sri Lanka.
   **True**
   Sri Lanka is one of the world’s leaders in gem exports, deriving USD hundreds of millions each year from the industry.

3. The garment and tourism industries have eclipsed more traditional revenue streams in the Sri Lankan economy.
   **True**
   Although tea and rubber were historically the chief exports, since the onset of the civil war the garment and tourism industries have eclipsed them.

4. Sri Lanka lags behind other South Asian nations in terms of its standard of living.
   **False**
   Sri Lanka ranks third among all South Asian nations in terms of per capita GDP, behind only Maldives and Bhutan and ahead of India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

5. Many analysts expect the Sri Lankan economy to continue to grow, despite the current worldwide economic situation.
   **True**
   While many of the world’s advanced economies continue to be challenged, Sri Lanka’s economy has grown. International credit-rating agencies predict that the Sri Lankan economy will continue to expand, with Standard & Poor’s estimating 6.8% growth in 2011.
CHAPTER 4: SOCIETY

Introduction

Sri Lankan society shares many cultural traditions and norms with its South Asian neighbors. Buddhism, which died out in India during medieval times, has thrived on the island since missionaries converted the ancient kingdoms in the third century C.E. Many people from North and South India, Central Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere migrated to the island in ancient times. They discovered aboriginal Veddahs and forged a new civilization. Sri Lanka’s religious and ethnic diversity stems from immigration and invasions from South India, Thailand, and Europe.

Ethnic Groups and Languages

Although Sri Lanka is a small country, slightly larger than West Virginia, the population is quite diverse. According to ancient Pali chronicles, the Sinhalese arrived on the island in the 6th Century B.C.E. Shortly thereafter, Tamil immigrants began arriving from South India. Arab traders, the forebears of the Moors, began settling around Sri Lankan ports, bringing Islam to the island. The Burghers are descended from the European peoples who migrated the island during colonial times. The Veddahs, the aboriginal people of what is now Sri Lanka, have lived on the island for millennia.

Sinhalese

The Sinhalese, the current majority group in Sri Lanka heavily represented in the government, are an Aryan people who trace their lineage and culture to North India. They were isolated among the Dravidians of South India (Tamils), and many scholars have discussed their feeling of being outnumbered in their country. This unease was exacerbated by the British colonial administration that from 1796 to 1948 treated the Tamil population of Sri Lanka as a privileged class, to the detriment of the Sinhalese.190 The Sinhalese speak Sinhala, an Indo–Aryan language closely related to the language of Maldives and the Indian island of Minicoy.191

Tamils

The Tamils, a minority group in Sri Lanka, are a Dravidian people who originated from India. More than 72 million Tamils live in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, across the narrow Palk Strait from Sri Lanka.192 Tamil is a Southern Dravidian language, closely related to Kannada and Malayalam.193

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According to the 2001 provisional census, which was conducted in only 18 of the 25 districts because of the civil war, Tamil peoples make up roughly 8.5% of the population of Sri Lanka. But in the northern and eastern districts, which were heavily affected by the civil war, Tamils historically represented between 18% and 90% of the population. These figures have been derived from the 1981 census, which was based on prewar populations. Maps created by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies show more than 66% Tamil in Trincomalee, concentrations between 33 to 49% in Batticaloo, and virtually no Tamils in the Ampara area, all in the Eastern District. At the time of this writing, the government is in the process of conducting its 2011 census and new figures are expected to paint a clearer picture of demographics.

Moors (Muslims)

The Moors of Sri Lanka are the island’s ethnic Muslims. They are descended from Arab traders, Indian migrant laborers, mercenaries, and other Muslims who came to the island and stayed. The Department of Census and Statistics report that the Moors make up 8% of the population. Most Moors speak Tamil as their first language. They are concentrated along the eastern seaboard of the country; however, many live in the country’s major cities.

Muslim leaders compared attacks by the LTTE to the early 90s, in which Muslims were forced out of Jaffna. The Sri Lankan government has resettled Moors who were dislocated by the


Religious tensions exist within the Muslim community between radical Islamists and those who subscribe to the local Sunni and Sufi traditions.

**Burghers**

Descended from European colonialists, the Burghers are a tiny population; however, they are an important element of Sri Lankan culture. Although some families have Dutch and English ancestors, most are Portuguese, a heritage upheld by the Burgher community. Just after independence, when the government mandated Sinhala or Tamil curriculum in the schools rather than English, many Burghers immigrated, largely to Australia, Canada, and the United States. Although Burghers had been almost exclusively Christian, some have converted to Buddhism because of the emergence of Sinhalese nationalism. Most Burghers live in Sri Lanka’s major cities, including those in the east of the country with predominantly Tamil or Moor populations.

**Veddahs**

The Veddahs, or Vanniyaletto as they call themselves, are the aboriginal people of Sri Lanka, who may have originally spoken an Austro-Asiatic language. Today, most speak Sinhala. They have long dwelled in the forests of the island, living as hunters and gatherers. Some scholars believe the Veddahs are direct descendants of the Neolithic peoples of prehistoric times. However, intermarriage and intermixing with Sinhalese and Tamils has taken place over time, causing a change in genetic makeup and the loss of their language. The ancient Pali chronicles,

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the *Cūlavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*, describe this intermixing in the beginning of the Sinhalese kingdoms.213

Although the Veddahs once inhabited much of the inland forests, their range today consists of small tracts of land around Anuradhapura, parts of the Central Highlands, and isolated areas of the eastern and southern coasts. Many consider their way of life to be endangered by encroaching urban development, deforestation, and pressures to assimilate into mainstream Sri Lankan society.214

**Religion**

Along with many ethnic groups, many religions thrive in Sri Lanka. Frequently, ethnic groups are associated with particular religions. The Sinhalese are predominantly Buddhist, although some are Christian. The Tamils are overwhelmingly Hindu, with a small but influential Roman Catholic minority. The Moors are nearly all Muslim. Although some converted to other religions, the Veddahs, who are a tiny ethnic group, continue to practice their traditional religion. Once overwhelmingly Christian, many Burghers converted to Buddhism following independence.

**Buddhism**

Siddhartha Gautama was born in the Sixth Century B.C.E. in India. In traditional lore, he was a Hindu prince of the warrior caste who renounced his family life and luxuries to pursue a spiritual path. After many years, Siddhartha became aware of the cause of suffering. He also realized a way to overcome this state and dedicated his life to passing this knowledge to others. In doing so, he reached a state of consciousness known as enlightenment. Thereafter, he was referred to as the Buddha, or “enlightened one.” He articulated a religious-philosophical doctrine now known as Buddhism.215

The Buddha was interested in restoring morality to what he perceived as overly legalistic and ritualistic Hinduism. Thus, the tenets of Buddhism focused on humankind, rather than on deities. The central premise of Buddhism is that humans can escape life’s pain only by ending their worldly attachments. The ultimate goal is enlightenment, known as *nibbana*. According to

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Buddhist scripture and belief, enlightenment is a state of mind that transcends desire and therefore ends suffering.216

The Buddha taught that people should avoid all extremes and attachments to passion in their lives and follow an ideal known as the Middle Way. This involves awareness of the Buddhist concept of the Four Noble Truths. According to the Buddha, desire is the cause of suffering and the Four Noble Truths outline a way to be free from it by following the Eightfold Path. This route, which requires no intervention by priests, consists of the following ethical-moral choices: “right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort.” The remaining two moral choices, right mindfulness and right concentration, involve the quality of meditation necessary to gain higher awareness and sustain oneself on the Eightfold Path.217

Like most religions, Buddhism is not a monolithic faith. There are many branches of Buddhism, but the one most prevalent in Sri Lanka is the conservative Theravāda Buddhism.218 Buddhism is the dominant religion among the Sinhalese, and 69% of all Sri Lankans follow this faith.219

Hinduism

The core of Hinduism is in the Vedas, ancient texts describing the beliefs and practices of the Vedic civilization, which developed in northwestern India during 2000 B.C.E.220 The Upanishads serve as a continuation of the Vedas and focus on religious knowledge. The great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, explained issues of duty, destiny, and virtue.221

Hindus believe in the reincarnation (samsara) of the soul (atman) and that the quality of a person’s next life is determined by one’s actions in previous ones (karma). The caste system, in which people are born into a particular social class, is tied to this concept. To improve their position, Hindus must remain spiritually devout and follow the social and moral guidelines according to their station in life (dharma).222 One can only overcome the cycle of rebirth through eradication of desire and ignorance. Achieved through monastic or devotional paths, this liberation from rebirth (moksha) is, in some conceptions, a union or reunion with Brahman, the eternal and infinite force from which everything else derives.223

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The pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses—hundreds of millions in scripture—are all expressions of Brahman, the Universal Supreme from which all things emanate and to which all must eventually return. Thus, worshippers may venerate any of these deities. The major sects of Hinduism are Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism, which take, respectively, Vishnu, Shiva, and Shakti (the goddess) as their primary deities. Hindus often worship these and other deities according to caste, locality, or personal choice.

Tamils make up roughly 8.5% of the Sri Lankan population, or about 1.9 million out of a total population of 21.2 million. The majority of Tamils are Hindu. The main form of Hinduism practiced in Sri Lanka is Shaivism. Because the cultural impact of the faith is widespread throughout Sri Lanka, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and Veddas regularly visit some Hindu sites.

Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion, meaning that its followers believe in a single deity. The Muslim community (ummah) calls this deity Allah. The Arabic term islam means “to submit” or “to surrender.” So a Muslim is one who submits to the will of Allah. Muslims believe that Allah revealed his message to the Prophet Muhammad, a merchant who lived in Arabia from 570 to 632 C.E. They consider Muhammad as the last in a long line of prophets including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Allah’s message, as relayed by Muhammad, is delivered in the Quran, the sacred text of Islam. Additional sacred scriptures include the Hadith, a collection of the sayings of Muhammad, and the sunna, which describes the practices of Islam by way of Muhammad’s example.

The essential beliefs and rites of the Muslim faith are encapsulated in the Five Pillars of Islam. The first and central pillar is the faithful recitation of the shahada, or Islamic creed: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” The remaining pillars include performing ritual prayers five times per day, giving alms to the poor and needy, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, and undertaking a pilgrimage to the Islamic holy city of Mecca.

References:
Muslims believe that Allah will judge them for their actions on earth, with the consequence of spending their afterlife in either heaven or hell.\textsuperscript{232}

The Muslims of Sri Lanka, originally descended from Arab merchants, subscribed to Sunni and Sufi teachings. (Sufi is a more individual relationship to Allah, without an intermediary.) However, as a result of the ethnic cleansing of the north by the LTTE, many Muslims sent their children to the Middle East for their education. There, many came under the influence of more radical forms of Islam, including Wahhabism.\textsuperscript{233} When these youths returned to Sri Lanka, they came into conflict with the more liberal traditions of mainstream Islam. Violence between radical and traditional Muslim groups in communities along the eastern seaboard ensued and remains a major security issue.\textsuperscript{234, 235, 236}

\textit{Roman Catholicism}

The Portuguese introduced Roman Catholicism to Sri Lanka, with the first missionaries arriving in 1546.\textsuperscript{237, 238} The Roman Catholic Church traces its roots to Jesus Christ and his Apostles. With the passing of millennia, a complex hierarchy emerged with the Pope at its pinnacle. During the same time, Catholic theologians developed an elaborate theology.\textsuperscript{239, 240}

In addition to caring for the Portuguese garrison, the first Catholic missionaries ministered to the local population. However, it was the conversion of the heir to the Kotte Kingdom that served as a watershed event. An estimated 3,000 Sri Lankans followed the prince’s suit and embraced the faith. Rejecting the Christian faith, however, the king of Jaffna sent troops to slaughter several thousand Tamil converts on Mannar Island. In response, the Portuguese fortified the island and used it as a base to conquer the Kingdom of Jaffna. It was among those Tamil converts on


\textsuperscript{233} Wahhabism is a puritanical sect of Islam that aims to strip away any folk elements, superstitions, or perceived innovations in Muslim communities. The movement also calls for a very strict implementation of shari’a law. It first took root in the Arabian Peninsula when the Saud family tied its fortunes to the progenitor of the sect, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, in the mid-18th Century. Since that time the movement has spread to other countries through the missionary efforts of the Saudi Kingdom, which continues today.


\textsuperscript{237} Patrick Peebles, \textit{The History of Sri Lanka} (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 41–43.


\textsuperscript{239} Gregg Allison, \textit{Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 430–449.

\textsuperscript{240} Michael J. Walsh, \textit{Roman Catholicism: The Basics} (New York: Routledge, 2005), 91–111.
Mannar Island that the Catholic faith took the strongest roots in Sri Lanka, with an estimated 100,000 or more converts by the end of the Portuguese presence in 1658.\(^{241}\)

During the Dutch period, missionaries introduced Calvinism to the island, and under British colonial rule other Protestant missionaries made some inroads, especially among the upper classes.\(^{242}, 243, 244\) However, Roman Catholicism remains the dominant strain of Christianity in Sri Lanka today.

Although a small minority, Roman Catholics have played a significant role in Sri Lankan history. The late leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was Catholic, which contradicts the idea among many international journalists, scholars, and policymakers that the terrorist group was a Hindu organization. Catholic clergy were among the more vocal supporters of the organization.\(^{245}\)

**Cuisine**

A typical Sinhalese dish may require more than a dozen herbs and spices, which are blended to create unique flavors that distinguish Sinhalese cuisine from related traditions from India. These spices include chili peppers, cumin, coriander, curry leaves, fenugreek, lemongrass, ginger, fennel seeds, garlic, onion, turmeric, cinnamon, and onion. Although many dishes include meat, Buddhists and Hindus do not eat beef and Muslims refrain from eating pork.\(^{246}\)

Coconut milk is used frequently and in a wide array of dishes, often as a thickening agent for gravies. Grated coconut also is a common ingredient and its use in *roti* distinguishes the Sinhalese variety of this traditional South Asian flat bread from those found among other peoples in the region.\(^{247}\) The Sinhalese also make good use of Maldive fish, tiny chunks of dried tuna with a savory taste, to accent many dishes.\(^{248}\)


Tamil cuisine is primarily vegetarian. Like most South Asian dishes, Tamil food tends to be quite spicy by Western standards (e.g., rasam, a spicy and sour soup; kool, a spicy seafood soup popular in northern Sri Lanka; and vadai, a deep-fried bread made from black gram flour).249

**Traditional Dress**

Dress is traditionally conservative for both men and women. Among Sinhalese women the sari is most common. It is made from a rectangular piece of cloth measuring from 5.5 to 8.2 m (6 to 9 yards) in length. It is usually first wrapped around the waist, creating eight or nine pleats in the front, each one smaller so they drape nicely. This wrapped material is then tucked into an underskirt to keep it in place. The remaining fabric is then stylishly draped diagonally across the midriff and over the shoulder. The sari is worn over a tight-fitting blouse that is often short, leaving the midriff bare.250 Among Tamil women, both the salwar kameez and sari are common. A salwar kameez is a loose fitting blouse worn over pants, something with a scarf draped over the shoulder or arm. Clothing is usually made of light, breathable materials to accommodate the oppressive heat.251

In rural areas, men are likely to wear a sarong, a span of cloth wrapped around the lower part of the body, instead of jeans or trousers.252 Traditional men may opt to wear the Sri Lankan “national suit,” a long, collarless, full-sleeved, typically white, shirt with a matching sarong.253

However, in the cities of Sri Lanka both genders have largely adopted Western clothing including jeans, slacks, dresses, shorts, t-shirts, and the like. However, many prefer more sensible footwear, wearing sandals and thongs, which are more comfortable in the tropical heat than sneakers or dress shoes.254

**Gender Issues**

Although Sri Lankan society has historically been patriarchal, in 1960 the country became the first to elect a woman prime minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Her daughter, Chandrika Kumaratunga, also served as prime minister and president of the country. However, women remain underrepresented in government, especially at the provincial, district, and local levels.255 These seeming contradictions reflect gender relations in Sri Lanka.

In 1931, while still a British colony, universal suffrage was granted in Sri Lanka. Social reforms in the 1940s and 1950s provided equal access to health and education. In 1978, a new constitution established affirmative action policies to address gender discrimination. Reforms in family law in the 1990s brought greater equality in property and financial transactions.\textsuperscript{256}

Since the 1970s, many women have joined the workforce outside the home. Although the majority remain in Sri Lanka, where they work in such diverse fields as education, construction, and industry, many women from lower socioeconomic classes serve as domestic workers abroad, especially in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{257}

In their traditional roles as wife and mother, women have experienced less social change. Men are the final authority in most Sri Lankan homes, and women are expected to perform domestic duties in addition to any job outside the home. Recent research suggests that domestic violence is a continuing concern in many Sri Lankan families.\textsuperscript{258}

\textbf{Arts}

Sri Lankan arts are a unique mixture of Indian, Southeast Asian, European, and indigenous traditions.

\textit{Dance}

Dance is a very important element in the cultures of Sri Lanka. Although prevalent forms vary from region to region and among the island’s ethnicities, they share common features and influences.

Kandyan dance, originating in the Kandyan Kingdom of the Central Highlands, is a highly regarded cultural form in Sri Lanka. In fact, the Sri Lankan government was instrumental in establishing dance instruction through provision of state funding for the development of dance academies. Devoid of the overt eroticism of some other South Asian dance forms, Kandyan dance relies more heavily upon rhythmic movements and weight shifting in more abstract form.


Traditionally performed only by males, dancers wear ornate regalia over a bare torso and a simple white sarong. The accompanying music relies heavily upon native drums.\textsuperscript{259, 260}

The Low Country dance form is more colorfully dramatic. Dancers don elaborate carved masks and costumes and often depict the act of exorcism from disease.\textsuperscript{261}

Sri Lankan Tamils adhere to classical dance forms imported from South India. Burghers maintain their European roots in preferring Western dance styles in their communities.\textsuperscript{262}

\textit{Music}

Although many Sri Lankans listen to Western music, folk music remains an important element of Sri Lankan society. Although contemporary Sinhalese music is strongly influenced by the musical traditions of India, the inclusion of folk elements distinguishes it from Indian music. Sinhalese nationalists have promoted music that romanticizes such folk elements because they create a national identity. Many Sri Lankan musicians receive state sponsorship, and their concerts are televised on government-operated television and radio outlets. Among the most renowned musicians of this genre are W.D. Amaradeva, Sunil Edirisinghe, and Nanda Malini.\textsuperscript{263, 264}

Traditionally serving as a means of social commentary, \textit{bailā} music is a Portuguese- and African-influenced genre popular at parties and informal social functions. The roots of \textit{bailā} can be traced to Portuguese colonialists and their African slaves. Blending Sri Lankan folk elements and contemporary pop music, \textit{bailā} enjoys great popularity on the island.\textsuperscript{265}

\textit{Folk Art}

\textit{Sanni} masks are one of the most popular forms of Sri Lankan folk art. Representing demons associated with the Sinhalese Buddhist cosmology, these masks are used in ritual healing. Today they are popular tourist items; however, many Sri Lankans continue to place them near entrances to their homes, believing they will protect the family from illness and evil. These masks also are used in dances of the Low Country.\textsuperscript{266, 267}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{260} Brett Atkinson, \textit{Sri Lanka} (London: Lonely Planet, 2009), 45–46.
\item \textsuperscript{263} “President Patronises in the State Musical Awards Ceremony,” \textit{ITN News} (Sri Lanka), 31 August 2011, \url{http://www.itnnews.lk/latest/?p=29109}
\item \textsuperscript{266} Meryl Doney, \textit{Masks} (Milwaukee, WI: Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2004), 18.
\item \textsuperscript{267} Royston Ellis, \textit{Sri Lanka} (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel, 2011), 233.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Other forms of woodwork, metal work, and weaving are among Sri Lanka’s other folk art traditions. The government actively promotes training to keep these traditions alive.²⁶⁸, ²⁶⁹

**Sports and Recreation**

Sri Lankans enjoy a wide variety of sports, including rugby, surfing, tennis, golf, badminton, and track and field. While legislators named volleyball the national sport in 1991, the national obsession and most popular sport is cricket.²⁷⁰, ²⁷¹

A ball game somewhat similar to American baseball, cricket is played with two opposing teams of 11 players each on an oval field. When on defense, a team attempts to break two sets of three sticks, known as wickets, that are set in the ground. The offensive team defends the wickets by striking the ball with a long flat bat. Points are scored when batsmen run between the two sets of wickets. Matches may vary in length depending on the type of match, lasting from a few hours to an entire day.²⁷²

Introduced to the island during the British colonial period, cricket is by far the most popular sport in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has been a member of the International Cricket Council (ICC) since 1981 and a member of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) since 1983.²⁷³

Throughout the three decades-long civil war, the Sri Lankan National Cricket Team presented a unified national identity by persuading Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim players to compete together and to make positive contributions to reinforce national pride.²⁷⁴ Sri Lanka co-hosted the 1996 and 2011 Cricket World Cup matches. The team won the championship in 1996, defeating Australia in the final match. In 2007, Sri Lanka again reached the finals but lost a close match to the Australian team. In 2011, Sri Lanka and India served as co-hosts of tournament. India emerged as the champions, defeating the Sri Lankan squad in a hard fought battle.²⁷⁵

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Chapter 4 Assessment

1. The Moors are the Muslims of Sri Lanka and were originally descended from Arab merchants who settled in the port cities.
   **True**
   The Moors of Sri Lanka are the ethnic Muslims of the island. They are descended from Arab traders, Indian migrant laborers, mercenaries, and other Muslims who found their way to the island, stayed, and intermarried with the other ethnic groups on the island.

2. Hinduism is the most common religion practiced in Sri Lanka.
   **False**
   Estimates indicate that more than 69% of Sri Lankans are Buddhist. Most Tamils, however, practice Hinduism.

3. A small but powerful minority of Tamils practice Roman Catholicism.
   **True**
   The late leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was Catholic. Further repudiating the misplaced notion that the terrorist group was a Hindu organization, Catholic clergy were among the more vocal supporters of the LTTE.

4. While Hindus and Muslims do not eat certain foods because of religiously reasons, Buddhists typically eat beef, pork, and other meats.
   **False**
   Many Sri Lankan dishes include meat; however, Buddhists and Hindus do not eat beef, and Muslims refrain from eating pork.

5. Brought to the island by the British colonials, the most popular sport in Sri Lanka is badminton.
   **False**
   Sri Lankans enjoy a wide variety of sports, including rugby, surfing, tennis, golf, badminton, and track and field. While legislators named volleyball the national sport in 1991, the national obsession and most popular sport is cricket.
CHAPTER 5: SECURITY

Introduction

Having concluded a 27 year civil war in 2009, Sri Lanka’s security outlook has changed dramatically in the last few years. Although the war has ended, many of the root causes of communal violence, which ignited the bloody conflict, have not been resolved. However, the influx of foreign aid and the transition to a peacetime economy have allowed the country to progress and to rapidly transform itself. Overseeing the transformation of the country’s armed forces, which are oversized for a peacetime force, from combat to reconstruction, remains a challenge.

Fears of resurgent Tamil militancy and the rise of radical Islamist movements in Sri Lanka also plague the nation. Violent clashes with law enforcement and security forces have occurred in a number of incidents in the latter half of 2011. Furthermore, relations with the international community have been strained by accusations that the government committed war crimes in the final stages of the civil war.

U.S. – Sri Lanka Relations

Lying in the middle of international shipping lanes, Sri Lanka aspires to become a major international shipping hub.\(^\text{276}\) The island is of strategic and economic interest to regional and world powers, including India, China, and the United States.\(^\text{277, 278}\)

In the late 1980s, the United States was searching for a new naval base to replace Subic Bay in the Philippines, and considered Sri Lanka’s deep-sea port at Trincomalee. However, political unrest and civil war plaguing the island and Indian opposition to the plan, both quashed U.S. interest in Sri Lanka’s east-coast port. However, with the war now concluded and the U.S. lease on Diego Garcia expiring in 2016, the location may become a viable option for a U.S. base.\(^\text{279, 280}\)


The United States remains Sri Lanka’s most important trading partner, receiving more than 20% of Sri Lankan exports. Since Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, the U.S. has provided more than USD 3.6 billion in assistance, making it a major contributor of military, economic and food aid. In 2007, direct, non-food aid approached USD 9.4 million.281, 282

Beginning in the mid-1990s, the United States has provided in-country training for Sri Lankan forces under the auspices of the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. In 2007, Sri Lanka signed on to the Access and Cross Servicing Agreement with the United States that permits U.S. warships and aircraft to utilize Sri Lankan ports and airfield facilities in return for U.S. economic aid.283

In 2009, the United States provided another USD 6.6 million to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help in mine-clearing projects in Sri Lanka.284 In support of Internally Displaced Persons housed in camps after the civil war, the United States also provided USD 28.3 million in food aid through the United Nations World Food Program.285 Relations between the United States and Sri Lanka, however, typically have been warmer when center-right parties are in control of the Sri Lankan government.286

Relations with Neighboring Countries

India

Sri Lanka’s relations with India have their roots in ancient history, because Sri Lanka has long striven to distinguish itself from India and to retain its independence against multiple waves of invasion and immigration from its larger neighbor.287, 288

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Sri Lanka and India share a legacy of British colonialism. Post-independence, one of the most pressing issues between the two countries has been the plight of the Tamils of Sri Lanka, whose welfare is a concern to India. During the Sri Lankan Civil War, relations between the two countries were severely strained because the southern Indian states, especially Tamil Nadu, was a base for recruiting and training operations of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). India’s deployment of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka in 1987 was unpopular there, sparking a major insurrection on the island. Sri Lankan leaders maneuvered carefully, trying to appease Indian demands while satisfying Sri Lankan voters. The IPKF mission was unsuccessful, and Indian forces were withdrawn by 1990. This failure and the LTTE’s assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991, this experience distanced India from the LTTE. Subsequently, India helped arm and train Sri Lankan forces during the end of the war.289

Currently, India is financing a new railway in northern Sri Lanka between Omannthai and Palali. The country is helping to renovate the north Sri Lankan port of Kankesanthurai, which was damaged in the 2004 tsunami.291, 292, 293 Furthermore, India has loaned Sri Lanka USD 200 million to build a major coal power plant in Trincomalee.294 India also is a major contributor to demining efforts in the former war zone.295

India would share in the rewards of a rebuilt Sri Lankan economy, because it is among the nation’s closest trading partners. India is Sri Lanka’s top importer and buys 4% of all Sri Lankan exports.296

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Pakistan

A key factor in Sri Lanka’s victory over the LTTE terrorists was Pakistan’s support. Sri Lanka’s efforts to modernize its military, especially in terms of weaponry and training were funded by Pakistan.\(^{297, 298}\) Given the LTTE’s integral role within the international terrorist network—trafficking guns, drugs, and personnel for other organizations—Sri Lanka’s efforts to eradicate the organization were important to Pakistan’s battle against Islamist terrorists.

Pakistan’s efforts to become a major worldwide arms supplier were boosted by its role in the defeat of the LTTE. The Pakistani military-industrial complex now has a marketing paradigm to supply arms against secessionist groups.\(^{299}\)

Signed in Colombo in August 2002, the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (PSFTA) became effective in June 2005. It provides for the free exchange of goods and services between the two countries. Although neither country has emerged as a top-tier trading partner of the other, the value of bilateral trade has increased. With the stabilization of the post-war Sri Lankan economy, the PSFTA could prove to be significant—in part because it eliminates tariffs that previously stifled trade.\(^{300}\)

China

China and Sri Lanka have long enjoyed amicable relations. In the second half of the 20th Century, and especially in the 21st, China has emerged as one of Sri Lanka’s prime sources of financial and military aid.\(^{301}\)

At the end of the Sri Lankan Civil War, China was a major supplier of weaponry and munitions.\(^{302}\) Now that the war is over, China is making major investments in Sri Lanka’s infrastructure, funding projects for road construction, railway modernization, and other significant


\(^{300}\) Saira Ahmed, Vaqar Ahmed, and Safdar Sohail, “Trade Agreements between Developing Countries: A Case Study of Pakistan – Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement” (paper, Munich Personal RePEc Archive, Munich, Germany, November 2010), [http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/29209/1/MPRA_paper_29209.pdf](http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/29209/1/MPRA_paper_29209.pdf)


Chinese capital and laborers, for example, are currently building a major port at Hambantota. Although the relationship is lucrative for Sri Lanka, it also is of strategic importance to the Chinese. Analysts have used the term “String of Pearls” to refer to China gaining geopolitical power by leveraging access to ports and airfields, developing favorable diplomatic relationships, and modernizing military forces, extending from the South China Sea to the Strait of Malacca, the entire Indian Ocean, to the Persian Gulf. This seems designed not only for economic benefits but also the encircling of India, which is the only true rival for Chinese control in the area. Thus, Sri Lanka, and the port at Hambantota has global security significance. At issue is control of the Asian continent by controlling the Indian Ocean. The Sri Lankans had first turned to India for funding but were refused. Many observers view this as a strategic blunder by the Indian government, which is scrambling to regain influence in Sri Lanka.

Maldives

Based on linguistic and cultural ties, Sri Lanka and Maldives have long-held ties. Recently the two countries have discussed closer collaboration on energy, tourism, education, and fishing issues. Furthermore, Sri Lanka is a major trading partner with Maldives, accounting for 5.4% of its imports and 12.3% of its exports. The majority of foreign workers in Maldives are from Sri Lanka, employed mostly in the tourism and garment industries.
Despite being exiled as a dissident, current Maldivian President Mohamed ‘Anni’ Nasheed was welcomed by Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa.\(^{312}\) Predictably, Nasheed has been one of the few world leaders to support Rajapaksa despite international allegations that the Sri Lankan government committed war crimes in the final stages of the civil war.\(^{313,314}\)

**Bangladesh**

Although neither country is a prominent trading partner of the other, agreements concluded in 2011 aim to increase economic cooperation and cultural exchange. The Lanka-Bangladesh Joint Committee for Economic and Technical Cooperation and the Bilateral Investment Promotion Agreement, for example, when implemented, will extend cooperation in transportation, shipping, and related industry.\(^{315}\)

**Police Force**

Sri Lanka’s police force operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense. Aside from enforcing day-to-day laws, these units also assist in counterterrorism operations. There is a great deal of redundancy built into the organization. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) investigates terrorism. The Security Coordinating Division has responsibility for intelligence gathering. The Bureau of Special Operations deals with interdiction of drug, contraband, and arms smuggling. The National Intelligence Bureau is comprised of the Directorate of Internal Intelligence (DII), which focuses on domestic intelligence matters, and the Directorate of Foreign Intelligence (DFI), which deals with international intelligence issues. The Special Investigation Unit is an internal affairs component, dealing with investigations and discipline of police misconduct. The Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) served as the investigative arm dealing with terrorist activity.\(^{316}\) The Police Special Task Force conducts anti-insurgent operations. The Security Coordinating Division collects intelligence on subversive activities. The Bureau of Special Operations deals with interdiction of drugs, contraband, and arms smuggling.\(^{317,318}\)

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The police are known for their strong-arm tactics. In June 2011, Inspector-General Mahinda Balasuriya resigned his position following an incident in which the police opened fire on workers protesting a government plan for pension reform. The incident resulted in at least 1 death and more than 100 injuries.  

Officially created on 4 March 2010, the Sri Lankan Coast Guard conducts maritime law enforcement and border security operations. Among its most challenging missions are combating human trafficking, halting illegal fishing, and assisting in international anti-piracy efforts in the Indian Ocean.

Military

Army

Headquartered in Panagoda, a town in the Western Province about 20 km (12.43 mi.) southeast of Colombo, the Sri Lankan Army is comprised of roughly 150,000 regular and reserve troops divided into 13 divisions. Garrisons are located in Panagoda, Colombo, Diyatalawa, Anuradhapura, and Minneriya.

Battle forces include 13 Infantry Divisions, with 1 Armored Brigade, 1 Air Mobile Brigade, 34 Infantry Brigades, 3 Special Forces Regiments, and 3 Commando Regiments; 9 Field Artillery Regiments, 1 Rocket Regiment, 1 Counter-battery Regiment, 1 Locating Regiment; 5 Signal Regiments, 4 Engineer Regiments, and 3 Logistic Command Areas.

In terms of equipment, the army’s armor is primarily composed of Czech-modified Soviet-built tanks; various Soviet-era armored infantry fighting vehicles (AIFV); various armored personnel carriers (APCs) of Soviet, Chinese, South African, and British manufacture; and British-made reconnaissance vehicles of various models. Artillery pieces are of various caliber of mainly Chinese, Slovakian, and Pakistani-manufacture. Air defense units utilize Bofors 40 mm L60/L70

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323 11 Division (Panagoda), 21 Division (Gajasinghapura), 22 Division (Trincomalee), 23 Division (Batticaloa), 51 Division (Jaffna), 52 Division (Vanni), 53 Division (Mirusuvil), 55 Division (muhamalai/Kilali), 56 Division (Kanakarayankulam), 57 Division (Vavuniya), 58 Division (Mannar), 59 Division (Weli Oya), and 61 Division (Wanni)


light anti-aircraft guns. The standard issue infantry weapons are a hodgepodge of primarily Western-manufactured models alongside a few Soviet-made SKS semi-automatic rifles.\(^{326}\)

With the war concluded, the size of the army is now under question. Personnel have served on numerous United Nations peacekeeping missions, even during the worst of the civil war.\(^{327}\) Now, soldiers are adjusting to their peacetime mission of rebuilding areas devastated by the war.\(^{328, 329}\)

**Air Force**

With its headquarters in Colombo—and bases in Ratmalana, Katunayake, Anuradhapura, Hingarukgoda, and China Bay—the Sri Lankan Air Force is approximately 30,000 strong. The force is divided into 12 squadrons. It is equipped primarily with Chinese fighter aircraft; Israeli Kfir fixed wing ground attack and fighters; Soviet 1970s-era ground attack and transport aircraft and transport, gunship, and attack helicopters; U.S.-made turboprop transport aircraft; and Israeli-manufactured EMIT Blue Horizon 2 and IAI Searcher unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV).\(^{330}\) The government is in the process of upgrading fighter aircraft, primarily with Russian and Chinese platforms.\(^{331}\)

Security lapses during the war, including a breach of defenses at the civilian Bandaranaike International Airport and the adjoining airbase, led to a significant change in training and standard operational procedures aimed at addressing such deficiencies.\(^{332}\)

Dozens of air force personnel currently are serving with the United Nations’ peacekeeping mission in Haiti. Some personnel have received foreign training in the United States and India.\(^{333, 334}\)

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Navy

Headquartered in Colombo, the Sri Lankan Navy has roughly 42,000 personnel and is divided into 6 fleets: Eastern Naval Area (HQ Trincomalee), North Central Naval Area (HQ Thalaimanar), Northern Naval Area (HQ Kankasanthurai), Southern Naval Area (HQ Galle), Western Naval Area (HQ Colombo), and North Western Naval Area (HQ Mulikulam). The ships are prefixed with the acronym SLNS. Equipment is comprised primarily of fast attack craft of mainly Chinese and Israeli-manufactured, with upgrades from the latter delivered in 2010, and patrol craft, including Indian-manufactured Vikram class offshore patrol vessel(s). The navy frequently intercepted LTTE-craft smuggling weapons and transporting personnel during the civil war. It was instrumental in the final stages of war, setting up a blockade that cut off the retreat of LTTE forces.

The navy’s current duties focus on coastal patrolling, along with escort and interdiction missions. It also finds itself in the center of international tensions associated with incidents of Indian fishing vessels violating Sri Lankan territorial waters. During the civil war, the Sri Lankan Navy developed On Board Security Teams (OBST). These units are assigned to merchant ships navigating Sri Lankan waters. The OBST has virtually eradicated piracy in Sri Lankan waters during the past three decades.

Sri Lanka has recently acquired a U.S.-manufactured maritime surveillance system in order to amplify its coastal defense capabilities. Whether this will be transferred to the Coast Guard or employed as a shared resource is unclear.

Issues Affecting Stability

Resurgent Tamil Militancy

Many issues could challenge the recently established stability in Sri Lanka. The key threat is continued ethnic tension between the Tamil and Sinhalese communities. Although few Tamils in

Sri Lanka supported the LTTE in the last decade of the war, many still believe that the injustices precipitating the conflict still exist and desire redress from the government—such as decentralizing power and granting greater autonomy to Tamil-majority regions. In the summer of 2011, clashes between security forces and Tamil vigilantes demonstrated just how fragile the peace is in some areas of the island.  

A related issue is the existence of LTTE supporters among the Tamil community in the West. Although the vast majority of the LTTE’s senior leadership were killed in the closing days of the war, much of the group’s international apparatus remained intact. Supporters among the Tamil abroad have formed the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE), frequently referred to as the “rump LTTE.”

Although not recognized as a legitimate body by any international government, and claiming to be a non-violent resistance movement, the organization continues to lobby for the creation of a separate Tamil nation in Sri Lanka. During the final years of the war, Western governments made concerted efforts to dismantle LTTE’s funding operations, resulting in the arrest of several Tamil immigrants in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Europe. Still, the group warrants careful observation by Western authorities and Sri Lankan intelligence organizations.

Islamist Violence

During the civil war, many Muslim (Moor) communities in the north and east of the country were ethnically cleansed by the LTTE. One consequence of this forced expulsion was that many Sri Lankan Muslim youth were sent abroad for their education by families concerned for their welfare. While abroad, many were exposed to the Wahhabi branch of Islam, a radical form

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prevalent in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East and Central Asia. Returnees who had embraced Wahhabism found themselves in conflict with the more moderate Sufi and Sunni communities in Sri Lanka. Since the late-1990s, sporadic violence has erupted between Wahhabis and mainstream Muslims, especially Sufis. In 2003, Wahhabi students at the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka in Oluvil issued a declaration calling for the establishment of a semi-autonomous Muslim region carved out of the Eastern Province. The main Muslim political party, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, has adopted many of the issues put forth in this highly controversial document. Some analysts and Sri Lankan officials worry that the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) may be making inroads among the island’s Wahhabi population. If so, this may represent the next major threat to stability in Sri Lanka.

Outlook

The Sri Lankan armed forces are one of the few militaries to successfully defeat a terrorist organization. Their knowledge of effective strategies in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency combat provides the country with a degree of security, as it prepares them for any future uprisings. Given the tension among ethnic communities on the island, it is highly likely that this knowledge will be put to test at some point in the not too distant future. The disruptive process of resettling internally displaced peoples is nearly complete; however, it will take time and will power for post-war populations to renegotiate a sense of community. Until that is achieved, the situation remains vulnerable to extremism, vigilantism, and communal violence. Such violence is not merely a concern in Sri Lanka but also among the various Tamil communities of the West. Just after the LTTE’s defeat, Tamil protestors in Europe and Canada carried out violent attacks targeting Sri Lankan embassies, Sinhalese expatriates, Buddhist temples, and law enforcement personnel.

Inflaming such tensions and encouraging Indian involvement in Sri Lankan affairs, one political party from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu in India—the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party—is demanding a referendum among Sri Lanka’s Tamils designed to obtain equal rights and bring a political solution to ethnic tensions. Jayaram Jayalalitha—leader of the affiliated All-Indian Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and, as of 2011, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu—has previously called for the seizure of a small island awarded to Sri Lanka in

the face of the rival Indian claim in 1974.\textsuperscript{354} If Jayalalitha or other Tamil nationalists gain more leverage at the national level, there will likely be a souring of relations between India and Sri Lanka.

Although Sri Lanka is rapidly modernizing its infrastructure and enjoying a robust post-war economy, the economic downturn may cause donors to reduce their foreign aid contributions due to their own country’s economic woes.\textsuperscript{355} This would devastate the Sri Lankan economy and probably affect the security situation in a negative way.


\textsuperscript{355} Shamindra Ferdinando, “Post-War Rehabilitation Funds Drying Up,” The Island (Sri Lanka), 2 July 2011, \url{http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=29253}
Chapter 5 Assessment

1. India and Sri Lanka have a complicated relationship, due in part to the large Tamil population on the island.
   **True**
   The Indian state of Tamil Nadu provided overt and covert assistance to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in their terrorist insurgency against the Sri Lankan government; whereas India’s national government vacillated between interventionism and support for Sri Lanka’s government in the war.

2. China maintained a position of neutrality during the Sri Lankan Civil War.
   **False**
   China provided much needed weaponry to the Sri Lankan armed forces in the final years of the conflict.

3. The Sri Lankan Army is now actively engaged in the reconstruction of the war zones throughout the island and transitioning into a peacetime force.
   **True**
   The Sri Lankan Army is redefining its mission in the post-war era.

4. The threat of renewed Tamil militancy and the increase in Islamist radicalism are major concerns facing Sri Lankan security.
   **True**
   Renewed Tamil militancy and the increase in Islamic radicalism threaten stability in Sri Lanka.

5. The Sri Lankan armed forces rely primarily upon U.S.-manufactured weapons systems.
   **False**
   The vast majority of equipment is of Soviet and Chinese make. These have been augmented with Pakistani, South African, Czech, and Israeli models, including Israeli-manufactured unmanned aerial vehicles.
FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. Sri Lanka is a landlocked country in the northern reaches of the Indian Subcontinent.  
   True / False

2. The Mahaweli Ganga is the longest river in Sri Lanka.  
   True / False

3. Deforestation has taken a serious toll on the forest cover of Sri Lanka.  
   True / False

4. The city of Kandy is renowned for its colonial architecture, especially its Roman Catholic churches.  
   True / False

5. The threat of devastating tsunamis is a major concern in Sri Lanka.  
   True / False

6. The origin legend of the exiled Prince Vijaya supports claims that the Tamil people were the first to settle the island of Sri Lanka.  
   True / False

7. The palace coup d'état of Kōṭṭe opened the door to European colonial encroachment by the Portuguese.  
   True / False

8. British colonial policies set the stage for the ethnic tensions that followed Sri Lankan independence.  
   True / False

9. The Norwegians replaced the Portuguese as the colonial power in Sri Lanka in the mid-17th Century.  
   True / False

10. Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa won international acclaim for his leadership in defeating the terrorist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).  
    True / False

11. Sri Lanka is an oil-exporting country.  
    True / False

12. Sri Lanka has free-trade agreements with both India and Pakistan.  
    True / False
13. The Sri Lankan government plans to continue developing the tourism industry in the post-war era.
   True / False

14. The Sri Lankan government retains control of most industry.
   True / False

15. Resettling internally displaced persons (IDPs) could be potentially problematic for the Sri Lankan economy.
   True / False

16. The Sinhalese are the indigenous people of Sri Lanka.
   True / False

17. Tensions exist within the Muslim community and between the Muslims and other ethnic groups.
   True / False

18. In contrast to other South Asian culinary traditions, Sri Lankan cuisine consists largely of bland dishes easily palatable by Westerners.
   True / False

19. Gender issues in Sri Lanka are steeped in draconian patriarchal practices.
   True / False

20. Sri Lankan art reflects influences of other South Asian, European, and indigenous traditions.
   True / False

21. Sri Lanka and the United States have generally cordial relations.
   True / False

22. Some analysts perceive an ulterior motive to China’s warm relations with Sri Lanka.
   True / False

23. Sri Lanka’s Coast Guard has a long tradition of providing for the defense of the island’s territorial waters.
   True / False

24. The Tamil diaspora represent a security concern not only for Sri Lanka but for the host countries in which they live.
   True / False

25. Wahhabis have generally displayed tolerance for followers of other branches of Islam.
   True / False
FURTHER READING


