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Occasional Paper No. 11

**In the Shadow of a Cease-fire:
The Impacts of Small Arms Availability
and Misuse in Sri Lanka**

By Chris Smith

October 2003

A publication
of the Small Arms Survey

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The Small Arms Survey

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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Acronyms and abbreviations | v |
| About the author | vi |
| Acknowledgements | vi |
| Summary | vii |
| I. Background and context | 1 |
| Map 1 Conflict areas in Sri Lanka | 4 |
| Map 2 Key Tamil diaspora communities in the world | 7 |
| II. SALW and sources of supply and support in the north and east | 10 |
| Map 3 Trafficking routes to Sri Lanka | 12 |
| III. SALW and sources of supply and support outside the theatre of conflict | 15 |
| IV. The social and humanitarian cost and impact of illegal SALW in the north and east | 20 |
| Map 4 Sri Lanka IDP returnee movements | 22 |
| Jaffna | 23 |
| Trincomalee | 28 |
| Batticaloa | 30 |
| The Vanni | 32 |
| V. The social and humanitarian cost and impact of illegal SALW beyond the theatre of conflict | 34 |
| Conclusion | 40 |
| Annexes | 42 |
| Bibliography | 45 |



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Internally displaced children in a camp in north-western Sri Lanka.

Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| BJP | Bharatiya Janata Party |
| CFA | Cease-fire Agreement |
| EPDP | Eelam People's Democratic Party |
| EPRLF | Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front |
| GDP | gross domestic product |
| GIS | Geographic Information Systems |
| GPMG | general-purpose machine gun |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IDP | internally displaced person |
| IPKF | Indian Peacekeeping Force |
| JVP | Janata Vimikthi Peramuna |
| LMG | light machine gun |
| LTTE | Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam |
| MSF | Médecins Sans Frontières |
| NORaid | Irish Northern Aid |
| PLOTE | People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam |
| RAW | Research and Analysis Wing |
| SALW | small arms and light weapons |
| SIPRI | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute |
| SLA | Sri Lankan Army |
| SLR | self-loading rifle |
| LKR | Sri Lankan rupees |
| TNA | Tamil National Army |
| USD | United States dollars |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| VVT | Velvettiturai |

About the author

Dr Chris Smith is the Director of the Centre for South Asia Studies and Consultant Director of the International Policy Institute, both at King's College, London. He has previously held posts at the Institute of Development Studies and the Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex and the United Nations University in Delhi. He has held visiting fellowships at the University of Wollongong, New South Wales, the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, and the Henry L. Stimson Center, Washington, DC.

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Over the course of this project, the author interviewed countless people in Sri Lanka to ascertain their views and to provide information on the humanitarian impact of illegal weapons. Without exception, they were helpful and concerned. Without their insights and their help in tracking down information and data, this project would not have been possible.

Summary

Sri Lanka appears to be entering the final chapter of the 20-year civil war between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Although it may be too early to assess, and the peace process is currently stalled, it does seem that the LTTE is more serious about a sustained peace process than at any time since the violence erupted in 1983.¹

The LTTE has proved extremely adept at trawling the international black market for illegal small arms and light weapons (SALW) and even more proficient at moving equipment from distant locales into the north-east of the island. The LTTE has also acquired significant supplies of weapons from stockpiles abandoned by the government forces. The LTTE has benefited from massive remittances and assistance from Tamil sympathizers across the world.

The global availability and acquisition of illegal SALW since the end of the Cold War has allowed the LTTE to develop into a formidable fighting force, capable at one stage—albeit fleetingly—of becoming a conventional force equal almost in size and shape to the Sri Lankan Army deployed in the north and east of the country.

Steady and dependable flows of illegal weapons into LTTE hands have significantly elongated this violent conflict. Consequently, many lives have been lost—some 65,000 before the Cease-fire Agreement (CFA) came into force. Also, the humanitarian impact has been considerable, especially in the internally displaced person (IDP) camps in the Jaffna peninsula and the Vanni. Some parts of the country have lost two decades of development since the outbreak of war. Lives as well as livelihoods have been devastated.

The situation in the IDP camps is mixed. In the Jaffna peninsula, the humanitarian impact has been much greater than along the eastern coast. Though most of the IDPs are surviving, some camps are characterized by extreme poverty and deprivation. However, the camps do not appear to be locations where weapons are either hidden or traded. Yet, clearly, the flow of weapons into the zone of conflict is related to the adverse humanitarian conditions that exist, particularly in the IDP camps.

As the peace process continues apace, the IDP camps are beginning to break up and IDPs are returning to their towns and villages. However, the north-east now faces a major threat from unexploded ordnance and landmines, both of which are bound to claim further lives and casualties in the coming months.

Other parts of Sri Lanka, beyond the zones of conflict, are also beginning to feel the effects of illegal SALW. A major source of concern is the growing number of soldiers deserting from the army, where morale is extremely low due to the efficacy of the LTTE as a fighting force. Deserters either acquire weapons after they desert or they leave their posts with their personal weapons. Once at large, many deserters engage in opportunistic crime or become linked to organized crime groups in and around the capital. Organized crime groups also provide political protection for politicians during election campaigns, which have become extremely violent in recent years. Also, in the early 1980s, the government armed politicians and their bodyguards, but none of the weapons distributed have since been returned or collected. The use of grenades is a major source of concern.

Across the board, violence in Sri Lanka appears to be on the increase. Yet the reasons why are not clearly understood. The government and the security forces will face a major challenge in the coming months and years to ensure that the weapons that once fuelled conflict between the government and the LTTE do not come to feed other conflicts across the country, such as a violent resurgence of the Janata Vimikthi Peramuna (JVP).

Sri Lanka now has a rare opportunity to end the war and address the roots of conflict between the government and the LTTE. Controlling the circulation of illegal weapons in the post-conflict environment will be extremely important to the success of the peace process. Without such controls, Sri Lanka will be unable to unlock the considerable economic potential that exists and make up the many lost years of development.

In the context of human security and development, illegal SALW can provide important and intractable problems and obstacles. Donors should be especially aware that Sri Lanka's future stability and well-being depend significantly upon addressing emerging problems relating to the possession and use of SALW across the island.

I. Background and context

The civil war in Sri Lanka endured for nearly two decades, from 1983 until the Cease-fire Agreement (CFA) was signed in February 2002. But even before independence in 1948, national legislation began to cut across Tamil interests. The situation for Tamils became worse after independence. Tensions began to mount through the 1970s, and by the 1980s, a civil war was under way. The war can be divided into three periods—Eelam I, II, and III—punctuated by periods when the fighting subsided and talks were mooted but, in effect, both sides were taking the opportunity to build up their reserves. The current cease-fire, agreed in February 2001, signaled an end to two bitter decades of violent conflict and came about, largely, because both sides had reached stalemate.

In international, geo-political terms, Sri Lanka is not considered an especially important or indeed vulnerable country. During the Cold War, the massive natural harbour at Trincomalee was considered potentially important for the main protagonists. However, the island's political instabilities, not least the possibility of a Marxist revolution with the Janata Vimikthi Peramuna (JVP) uprising in 1987, have been monitored with some apprehension.

Peace talks between the government and its Tamil opponents have been under way and initial progress was more rapid than expected, until negotiations broke down after six rounds of talks. However, the peace process itself will take time to regather its momentum, not least because there are significant differences over the interpretation of the CFA. For the Sri Lankan government, it draws a line under the civil war and provides an opportunity to return to normalcy. For the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), however, it is perceived as the start of an interactive process that will debate the future political configuration of the island.

Page 1

The conflict between the Tamils and the Sinhalese communities in Sri Lanka dates back many decades. As far back as 1931, the Donoughmore Commission delineated a system of territorial representation, thereby largely excluding Tamils from the executive branch of government (Bookman, 2002, p. 168). After independence in 1948, the Sinhalese, Buddhist political elite began to pass legislation that disempowered and marginalized the Tamil community in the north-east and in the hill country. Tensions mounted in the early 1970s and a state of emergency was imposed in the north-east. Violence became commonplace in the late 1970s and escalated dramatically in 1983, following anti-Tamil riots across the island. By the mid-1980s, a civil war was under way.

Over the past two decades, the conflict has cost an estimated 65,000 lives. It has been further estimated that two-thirds of these deaths have been civilians (*Strategic Comments*, 2000). In the north-east, two decades of opportunities for development have been lost and the civic infrastructure is largely destroyed. Other parts of the island have also suffered economically and socially. Efforts to resolve the conflict, including the efforts of an Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF), have failed thus far. It is largely accepted that, until recently, LTTE overtures for peace have been tactics to provide breathing spaces designed to allow the procurement of arms and the recruitment of men, women and, of late, children. The current peace process is nevertheless widely accepted as a significant change in the conduct of the war.

The acquisition of illegal small arms and light weapons (SALW) by the LTTE has been crucial to the conduct and duration of the conflict (Collier *et al.*, 1999). The LTTE has proved itself extremely adept at trawling international networks to facilitate the movement of illegal SALW, especially since the end of the Cold War. The weapons are financed primarily by expatriate Tamils who have consistently supported the LTTE cause. A major consequence of the LTTE's ability to procure illegal weapons has been to extend the duration of the conflict. However, the ideological rights and wrongs that underpin the conflict have been overlooked in recent years. This has worked against the interests of the LTTE. A major reason is the growing humanitarian impact of the conflict and the overall brutality of the war.

In certain respects, this is a manifestation of the increasingly callous and single-minded approach of the LTTE leadership to the war, which has resulted in the widespread use of child soldiers, suicide bombers, and landmines. However, it is also the case that the duration of the war has had a gradual but discernible impact upon already vulnerable groups and upon development. From the IDP camps in the Jaffna peninsula to the Middle East employment recruitment offices in Colombo, there is barely a (poor) family in the country that remains untouched by the war. Despite the suffering that illegal SALW have caused and facilitated, however, they have done remarkably little to further the political claims of the LTTE by other means.

The first phase of the civil war—Eelam I—began on 27 November 1983 and lasted until 3 May 1987. Over the course of mid-1987, Indian attempts to broker a peaceful settlement began to founder. In October 1987, the LTTE recommenced attacks against Sinhalese and Muslim targets. The IPKF responded by launching Operation Pawan and, by November, the war had recommenced. By April 1990, the IPKF had been withdrawn, having lost many men and achieved very little. This opened the way for the LTTE to commence Eelam II, on 11 June 1990, which lasted until 13 October 1994, when the LTTE once again sued for peace, which did not last, and Eelam III duly broke out on 19 April 1995.

Page 2

In response, the government decided it would concentrate its efforts on the east, which in turn allowed the LTTE to consolidate its position in the north. The military then adopted a new strategy designed to control much larger areas of territory, following the 1995 cease-fire, intended to capture and clear the Jaffna peninsula of around 17,000 LTTE, clear the Vanni and open the military supply routes (especially the A9 highway), and clear the east of around 2,000 LTTE. The LTTE leadership responded to the direct attacks on the Jaffna district by moving almost the entire population of the city to the north. In 1996, the major military camp at Mullativu became exceptionally exposed because the security forces were so thinly spread. The LTTE attacked and successfully captured a very large amount of ammunition and weapons, including even howitzers, which provided a significant increase in its capability. In April 2000, the LTTE captured Elephant Pass, a major turning point in the war and a major strategic reversal for the Sri Lankan government, especially for the security forces and government control of Jaffna. The security forces sustained major casualties, Sri Lankan Army (SLA) morale dropped significantly, and rates of desertion began to increase.

Following the capture of Elephant Pass and significant supplies of weapons, the LTTE attempted to transform itself from a guerrilla force to a more regular, conventional army. In so doing, it lost 2,433 men, who were either killed or wounded. Through 2001, the army concentrated upon small-scale operations, because a full-scale meeting of force with the LTTE had become too costly. The peace process started soon after the December 2001 election and is now under way.² The LTTE leadership appears to have taken the monumental decision to sue in earnest for peace. At the time of writing, delayed peace talks have taken place in Thailand, and again in Oslo and Berlin, aimed primarily at negotiations over the future

political configuration of Sri Lanka, but are now stalled. The mercurial LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, has emerged from the Vanni, discarded his uniform, and is now talking enthusiastically about the future of the peace process and regretfully about the past. Quite why Prabhakaran has taken such a strategic decision at this juncture is not clear, but six main issues may be of relevance: the declining indigenous support for Eelam; war weariness; growing international concern with small arms flows; declining levels of sympathy for the LTTE; the changing international climate following the attacks on the World Trade Centre of 11 September 2001 (hereafter referred to as '9/11'); and the changed demographics of Sri Lanka.

Firstly, successive generations of expatriate Tamils have become less and less interested in the ideology of Eelam and, commensurately, remittances from Tamil families are now harder to secure. Secondly, the war is now at stalemate, a situation that has existed since 2000. Moreover, the Tamil population is extremely war weary. Local political support for the LTTE is certainly on the decline as a result. The developmental and humanitarian costs of the conflict have been high, especially in and around the Jaffna peninsula, which has contributed significantly to levels of disaffection. Thirdly, the global concern over the proliferation of illegal SALW may yet come to have an adverse effect upon the LTTE weapons procurement programme, especially if former Soviet Union countries and other poorly-constrained suppliers are brought into line by the further development of global norms and constraints.

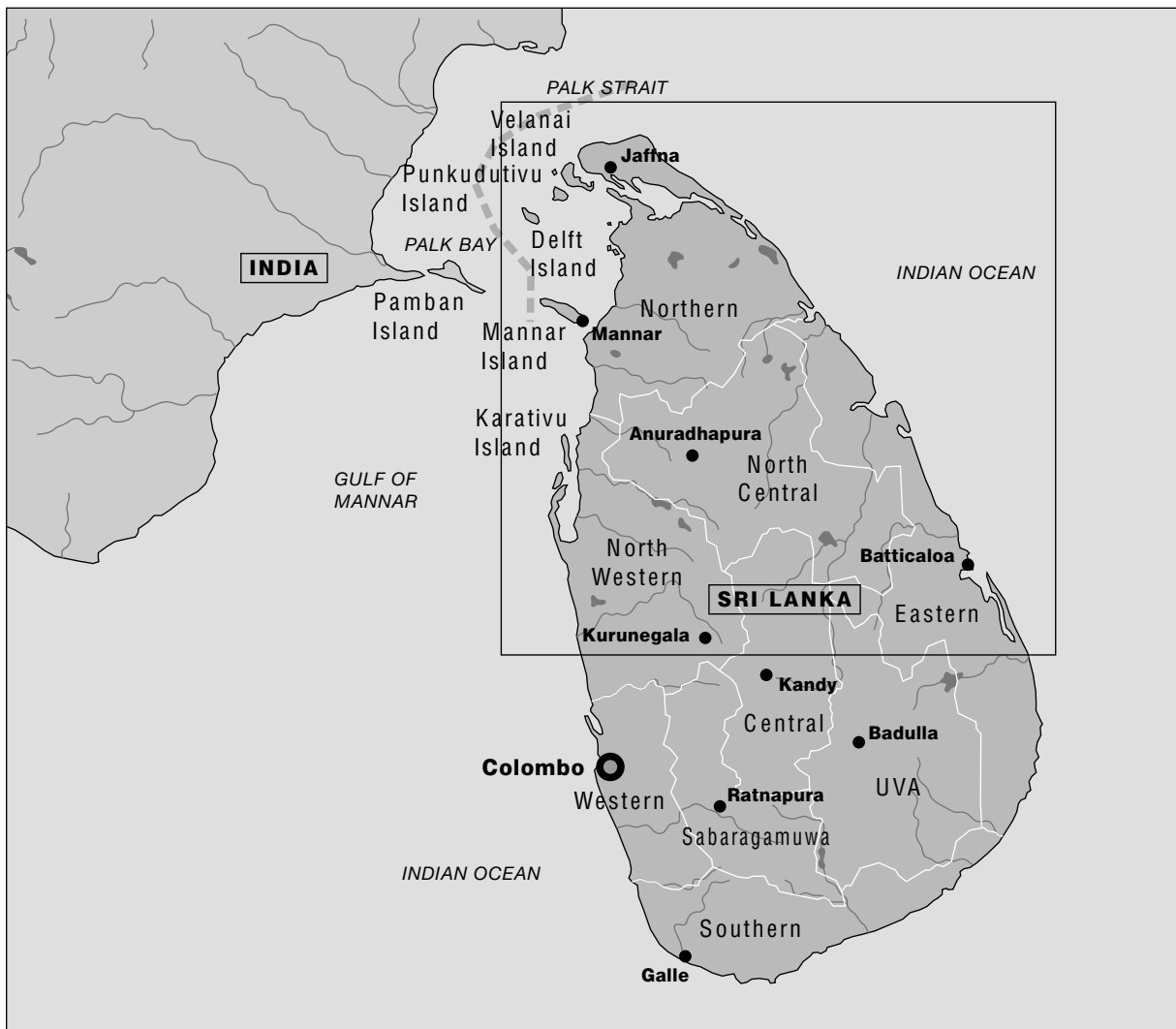
Fourthly, international support for the Tamil cause has been on the wane for several years. Whereas once the Tamil cause attracted considerable support from liberal, 'like-minded' governments, NGOs, and international organizations, this is no longer the case. The LTTE's use of child soldiers and suicide bombers, in particular, has turned international public opinion against it. The assassination of prominent academic, political, and human rights activist Neelan Tiruchelvam was also a major tactical error (*The Sri Lanka Monitor*, 1999), as was the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the former Indian prime minister. Moreover, the international community has grown decidedly tolerant of the Sri Lankan government's human rights excesses, democratic deficits, and military ineptitude. As such, the weight of international sympathy has shifted in an unexpected but unequivocal way to favour the Sri Lankan state, and the original causes of the conflict have all but disappeared from the collective international memory.

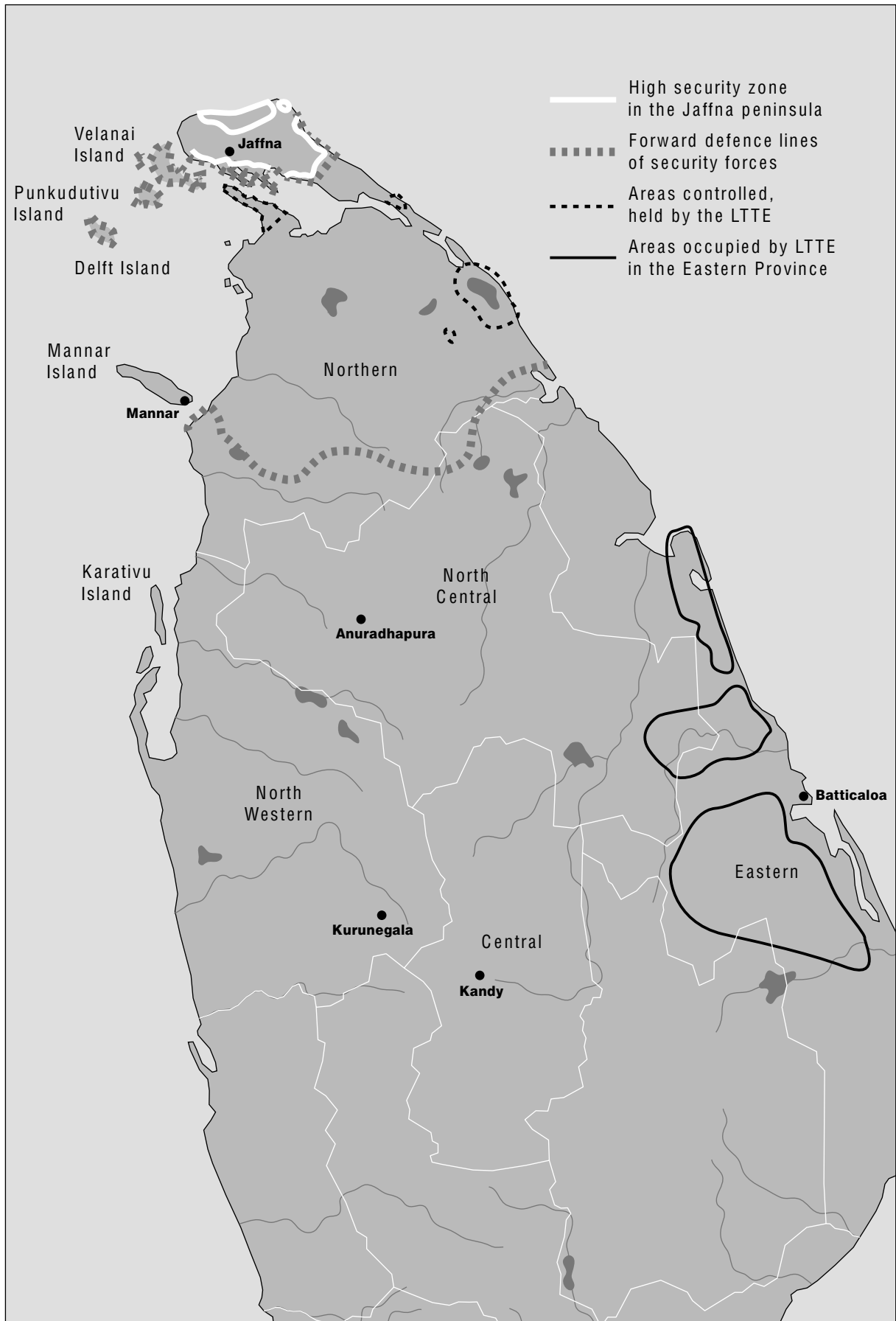
Fifthly, the events on and after 9/11 have created a global coalition against terrorism that will have profound implications for all insurgent groups, including the LTTE. Even before 9/11, a growing number of countries had already proscribed or were moving towards proscribing the LTTE as a terrorist organization. Efforts to slow the flow of funds to the LTTE have also met with some success—USD 4 billion is currently frozen. Prabhakaran must surely have surmised that more proscription would damage further the financial and political networks that sustain the movement at home. The United States, for example, has adamantly refused to lift the ban on the LTTE that has been in place since 1998, stressing instead full support for the territorial integrity of the island (Associated Press, 2002).

A final reason concerns land and demography in the areas controlled by the LTTE. The diaspora of Tamils has resulted in the migration of 500,000 Tamils overseas, and an additional 200,000 have relocated to the south of Sri Lanka. Overall, this has reduced the Tamils to eight per cent of the population, from 12 per cent at the start of the conflict. The redrawing of the ethnic map of the island is known to be a significant source of concern for the LTTE leadership (*The Economist*, 2002). Indeed, on paper, the LTTE claims to be in control of 28.7 per cent of Sri Lankan territory and 60 per cent of the coastal belt. However, because of the war, only five per cent of the population now lives in this area and the north-east conflict zone is, relative to other parts of the country, significantly depopulated.

Whether or not the peace will hold remains to be seen. The LTTE still believes that it can demand a separate homeland, albeit one that falls short of an independent Eelam. The Sri Lankan government has barely declared its hand. Sinhalese public opinion is largely in agreement that the 'war' against the LTTE has been won and that the decommissioning of weapons should start at the earliest possible moment. Yet, the LTTE almost certainly has little initial intention of decommissioning weapons or demobilizing for a long time to come, and the leadership sees a role for its cadres in policing the north and east of the island. Clearly, the peace process will also be an important learning process as well for both sides in the future, if the conflict is to be resolved and the war brought to a permanent close.

Map 1 Conflict areas in Sri Lanka





For Sri Lanka, the most important political and constitutional questions have yet to be asked or answered. There is no consensus and little discourse concerning the future political configuration of the island, especially on the government side. Whether or not the island should emerge as a unified, federated, or confederated political entity with some form of homeland for Tamils is an intensely political issue, although the LTTE would argue that a confederal solution has been ruled out. Nor has anybody worked out a future role for Prabhakaran, which has become even more complex since the Sri Lankan courts sentenced him, *in absentia*, to a 200-year prison sentence. Although a shrewd and talented strategist and tactician, he is by no means the best person to lead the LTTE in the political arena. Nor has he proved amenable to pluralistic principles and democratic practices, both of which will be part of the package of expectations that will accompany overseas economic aid for reconstruction and rehabilitation. Equally worrying is the current determination in India to extradite the LTTE leader to face trial for the murder of Rajiv Gandhi. This should also be placed in its political context—Pakistan has already successfully called India's bluff over the extradition of Islamic militants. Another failure would compromise India's traditional hegemony in the region. The state legislature of Tamil Nadu has recently voted to send the Indian Army to Sri Lanka to capture Prabhakaran and return him to India (*Chennaionline*, 2002). In Delhi, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led (BJP) coalition government is coming under pressure to take an unequivocal stand on the extradition of the LTTE leader (*The Hindu*, 2002). In all likelihood, the BJP-led coalition will opt quietly to drop the extradition issue, especially if the current tension with Pakistan persists. A Congress Party-led government in 2004, which seemed a real possibility until the December 2002 state elections in Gujarat, would have much greater difficulty in adopting a benign position with Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv's widow, in such a prominent position.

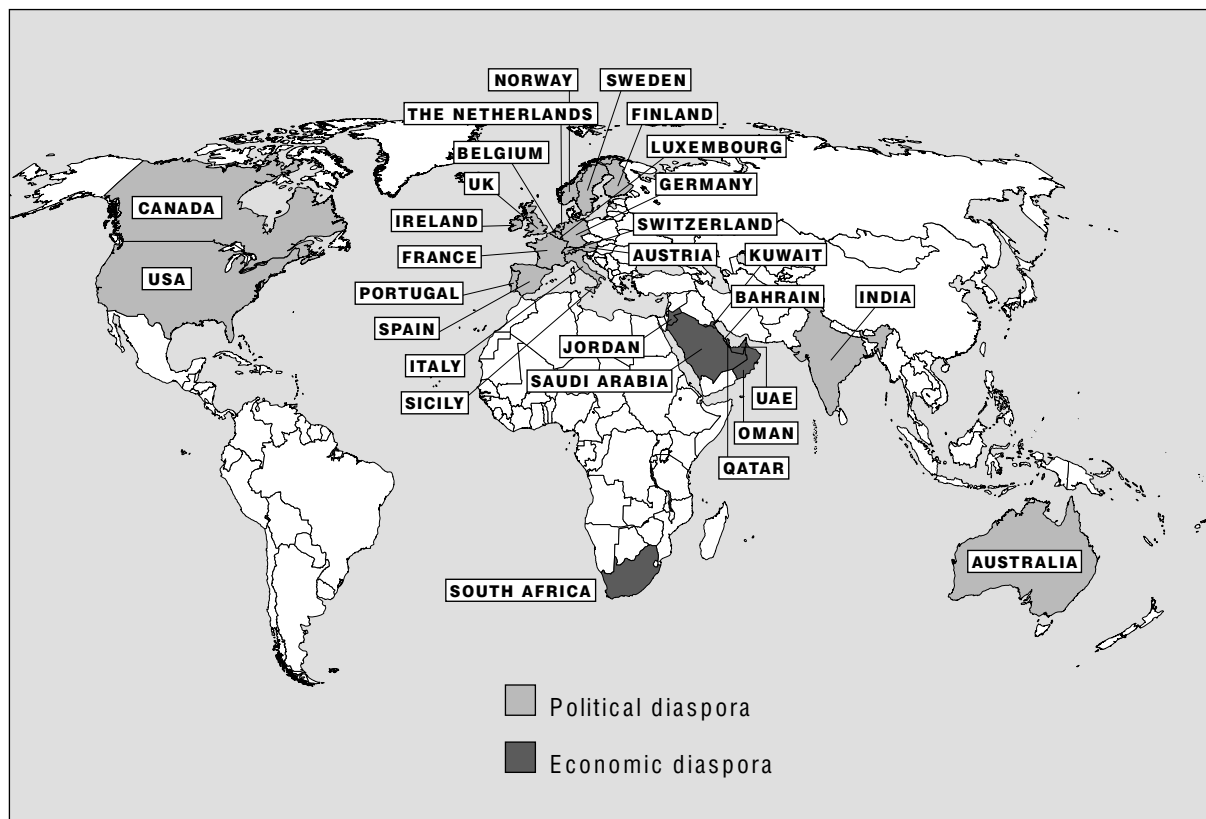
Page 6

How these events unfold are important and relevant because they will have a significant impact upon the LTTE's willingness to decommission its weapons holdings over the long term, which are primarily composed of SALW. Recent events in Northern Ireland reflect the crucial political importance of weapons decommissioning and the extent to which disarmament can quickly become the key aspect of an advanced peace process. Certainly, this will also be the case in Sri Lanka and will consistently test the LTTE commitment to a political peace process.

The northern and eastern seaboard of Sri Lanka have provided the principal theatres for the civil war. These regions remain a patchwork of 'cleared' and 'uncleared' areas, with those over which the state has control ('cleared') and those under the control of the LTTE ('uncleared'). The conflict has been fought primarily with light weapons, although in recent years the LTTE have captured heavy weapons, especially artillery, from the army (*The Sri Lanka Monitor*, 2000).

In the early years, the civil war was intimately bound up with Sri Lanka's relationship with India and the latter's role in South Asia. Until her assassination in 1983, Mrs Indira Gandhi projected India, through the 'Indira Doctrine', into a position of unequivocal regional hegemony which in turn permitted it to become involved in the affairs of other countries in the region, virtually at will. This included Sri Lanka, where India has a long history of support for the Tamil cause. At the same time, India has been especially keen to avoid the partition of Sri Lanka over the course of the civil war. Not only would this have set an awkward example for Kashmiri and Punjabi liberation groups that were extremely active at the same time, but, in the early years, the concept of Eelam was occasionally linked to *Dravida Desam*, a Dravidian nation that would include Tamil Nadu (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 3). Moreover, support for the Tamil cause was inextricably bound up in relations between the centre and the state government of Tamil Nadu.

Map 2 Key Tamil diaspora communities in the world



The anti-Tamil riots of July 1983 encouraged Indira Gandhi to support Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka, which was itself gaining support as moderate Tamils became less effective and more marginalized. Moreover, India was concerned that, in exchange for military and economic aid, Sri Lanka would increasingly become a satellite of the US. Since US Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger's 1981 visit to Sri Lanka, India had been concerned about the fate of Trincomalee, the second largest natural harbour in Asia and a key prize in the superpower 'base race' of the 1980s (*The Times of India*, 1981). Trincomalee is also an important area for the Tamils, second only in political and cultural significance to Jaffna.

As Tamil restlessness increased through the mid-1980s, the LTTE began to emerge as the most powerful and the most militant force. Condoned by New Delhi and facilitated by the Tamil Nadu state government, the LTTE received the matériel to mine roads, eliminate 'anti-social elements', and carry out insurgent actions. Also by the mid-1980s, the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) had developed the means to procure SALW from Southeast Asia in considerable quantities (Gunaratna, 1993, p. 114). Following a similar policy to his mother, the new Indian prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, attempted to achieve a delicate balance. On the one hand, Congress relied upon growing electoral support in the southern states, including Tamil Nadu, especially once the sympathy vote that gave Rajiv Gandhi a landslide election victory following the assassination of his mother had declined. On

the other hand, the government had to take care not to provide enough support to fuel the centrifugal forces that, throughout the 1980s, threatened the unity and security of the country. Nevertheless, India was clearly an important supplier of SALW, especially during the early phases of the civil war.

In 1986, the LTTE set up the funding network that would provide the financial resources to prosecute the war over the next sixteen years and, not least, to procure most of the weapons, ammunition, and explosives it has required. The LTTE has raised millions of dollars from sympathetic Tamils over the years. The methods employed for raising funds seem to have varied. The LTTE appears to rely upon voluntary contributions, which may average as much as USD 300 per family (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2002). But additionally, the LTTE is alleged to have resorted to extortion, by levying an ongoing tax on people who have been moved illegally from Sri Lanka to other countries.³ The LTTE also levies taxes on Tamil families living under its control, but the amounts it is able to raise are limited by the extreme poverty of most of the people. All in all, this has provided the LTTE with a substantial financial resource base to conduct the war and, of course, has more than covered the cost of military equipment.

Significantly, the LTTE has few problems buying weapons at commercial, black-market rates, as it is able to trawl international networks for equipment on the strength of remittances, contributions, and network contacts provided by expatriate Sri Lankan Tamils, which number perhaps half a million and constitute an extremely affluent expatriate community (Sriskandarajah, 2002).⁴ Although the LTTE has been known to resort to extortion, this is rarely necessary and expatriate Tamils have proved to be unerringly generous over the past 15 years. By some estimates, the LTTE manages to collect USD 1 million a month from expatriates in Australia, Canada, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, but not the United States, where Tamils are prevented from raising money because the LTTE has been designated a terrorist organization.

Page 8

The LTTE owns and operates gasoline stations, restaurants, and small shops around the world. The genuine interest on the part of these expatriates in the conflicts, the shrewd trading acumen of the LTTE, and the growing availability of the type of weapons favoured by the LTTE suggests that the movement can continue to engage the Sri Lankan security forces for as long as it deems necessary and appropriate. However, against this must be set the declining interest in the conflict amongst successive generations of diaspora Tamils (Sriskandarajah, 2002). Nevertheless, a monthly income of around USD 1 million dollars is a substantial input into the war chest of any insurgent organization. Although it is to be presumed that imported SALW are purchased at market prices, the LTTE is known for its frugal ways, which includes the leadership.

Prior to the signing of the CFA, there were various attempts by the LTTE to sue for peace. The introduction of the IPKF was, in essence, as a result of a cease-fire between the government and the LTTE. In 1994, when Chandrika Kumaratunga became president, she took office with a mandate to negotiate peace without allowing secession and duly offered a package to the LTTE based upon significant devolution. However, by April 1995, the process had collapsed. Critics have pointed out that the LTTE leadership has used these cease-fires to expand the cadre's military strength and capability, to acquire weaponry from overseas, and to increase conscription (*Strategic Comments*, 1997).

This research report, commissioned by the Small Arms Survey in late 2001, is the result of desk research and fieldwork undertaken primarily in early 2002. Fieldwork involved extensive interviewing in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, and interviews in Hambantota, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, and Jaffna, including a number of IDP camps situated in or around these towns. These interviews took place in January and February 2002. The interview techniques in the IDP camps were loosely modeled on participatory research principles. However, the difficulties that arise when attempting to solicit the views of those actually affected, the IDPs in particular, should not be underestimated.⁵ In general, the IDPs were unanimous in denying the existence of illegal weapons in the camps, which probably is a correct assessment of the situation, for reasons explained below. However, had the camps been used as a conduit or storage site for illegal weapons, the IDPs would probably not have volunteered much information to a foreigner on a first visit.

The security sector, including the police, offered a reasonable amount of information that corroborated much of the already existing research on illegal SALW in Sri Lanka, much of it available in published form. However, the security forces, especially the police, appear to lack the resources or, indeed, see the need for the collation of data and statistics that might reflect a rise in the criminal use of illegal SALW. Therefore, where there are identifiable gaps, it is not necessarily the case that data has not been unearthed or may have been withheld—it may simply not exist in accessible form. Most of the interviews were ‘off the record’, which accounts for the lack of identification in the footnotes.

II. SALW and sources of supply and support in the north and east

The illegal procurement system developed by the LTTE over the course of the conflict is perhaps the most innovative and impressive ever witnessed for a non-state organization. Backed by expatriate Tamils willing to provide money and contacts, the LTTE was able to trawl many countries in Southeast Asia—Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Myanmar, and Singapore—for the weapons and non-military equipment it required to sustain the civil war. The end of the Cold War brought fresh opportunities, as new, illegal markets developed in the former states of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe.

Many of the most prominent LTTE leaders originate from the small fishing port of Velvettiturai (commonly known as VVT), which is the base for a distinct Tamil caste of seafarers traditionally adept at smuggling goods across the Palk Strait, the narrow stretch of water that separates India from Sri Lanka. They are also known to have operated across the Bay of Bengal and are capable of reaching as far as Java, Sumatra, and the South China Sea.⁶ After independence in 1948, many turned naturally to smuggling goods across the Palk Strait. This strained relations between the local police and the VVT residents, which had a significant and positive impact upon the ability of the LTTE founders to recruit members locally and, over time, the VVT factor amounted to an important contribution to the LTTE gaining a decisive edge over other Tamil political groups (Davis, 1996).

Page 10

The methods by which the LTTE manages to procure weapons are varied. The earliest LTTE weapons procurement network was run by a VVT smuggler, Sothilingam, initially with the assistance of the Indian external intelligence service, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), and the Tamil Nadu state authorities. The operation expanded dramatically after the Tamil crisis deepened in July 1983. By the mid-1980s, the LTTE had established an independent arms procurement programme, which even included the production of basic landmines, grenades, and mortars. This was followed by the development of a clandestine international procurement network, which gave the LTTE leadership some independence from RAW and the political leadership in Tamil Nadu. Simultaneously, one of the LTTE main rivals, the PLOTE, was virtually crippled when Indian customs officers in Madras intercepted a container load of weapons and when, shortly after, PLOTE agents lost a down payment of USD 300,000 for a consignment of weapons from Yassir Arafat's al-Fatah group. A similar incident a year later involved a Tamil businessman from Singapore (Davis, 1996).

More recently, the international procurement network is run by Tharmalingham Shunmugham, alias Kumaran Pathmanathan, and colloquially known as 'KP'. His main operating bases have been Rangoon, Bangkok and, of late, Johannesburg. Most of his transactions are financed through bank accounts held in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom (Byman *et al.*, 2001).

In the mid-1980s, the LTTE abandoned its practice of chartering vessels to ship arms into India and Sri Lanka in favour of the direct purchase and development of their own fleet of ocean-going ships, known within the LTTE as 'Sea Pigeons'. Today this fleet comprises at least eleven small freighters, registered under flags of convenience (Honduran, Liberian, and Panamanian), owned by LTTE front companies and crewed by VVT Tamils (Byman *et al.*, 2001). This move alone has made the LTTE procurement network unique amongst insurgent groups across the world. These ships are only used for transporting arms when needed, and most of the time they are involved in perfectly legal commerce, but they are always available when required to collect and deliver illegal weapons to the LTTE.⁷

Singapore emerged as the major centre for LTTE arms procurement from the mid-1980s, in part due to the substantial expatriate Tamil community, but also because the port city acts as a trading hub for Southeast Asia, particularly for dual-use items. For example, the LTTE was able to set up a viable communications network on the strength of radios purchased from Singapore, and subsequent shopping lists included computers, electronics, night-vision binoculars, powerful outboard motors, and diving equipment. The methods by which the LTTE manages to procure equipment from these sources are several. Communications equipment presents few problems, in Southeast Asia or anywhere else, because of its dual-use characteristics. Military equipment, however, is either procured within the country and then shipped illegally or makes its way out of the country on the basis of bogus end-user certificates, and thereafter is directed towards Sri Lankan territorial waters for delivery to the LTTE.⁸

Also during the mid-1980s, the LTTE established front companies in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rangoon, and Kuala Lumpur, primarily to procure equipment with no obvious dual-use capability. Many of the LTTE weapons were purchased from Khmer Rouge members selling equipment across the border into Thailand. The Andaman sea coast belonging to Thailand provided points from which consignments could be shipped back across the Bay of Bengal to Sri Lanka, and the Thai town of Trang also became an important staging post (Davis, 1996).

Myanmar provided the LTTE with an even more entrenched enclave. LTTE vessels were contracted to ship timber from southern Myanmar to Thailand, and these contracts allowed links to be made between the LTTE leadership and the Burmese military. By 1992, a semi-permanent LTTE establishment existed near Twantay, a small town in the Irrawaddy delta south of Rangoon. This base was used as a trans-shipment point and a communications facility (Davis, 1996).

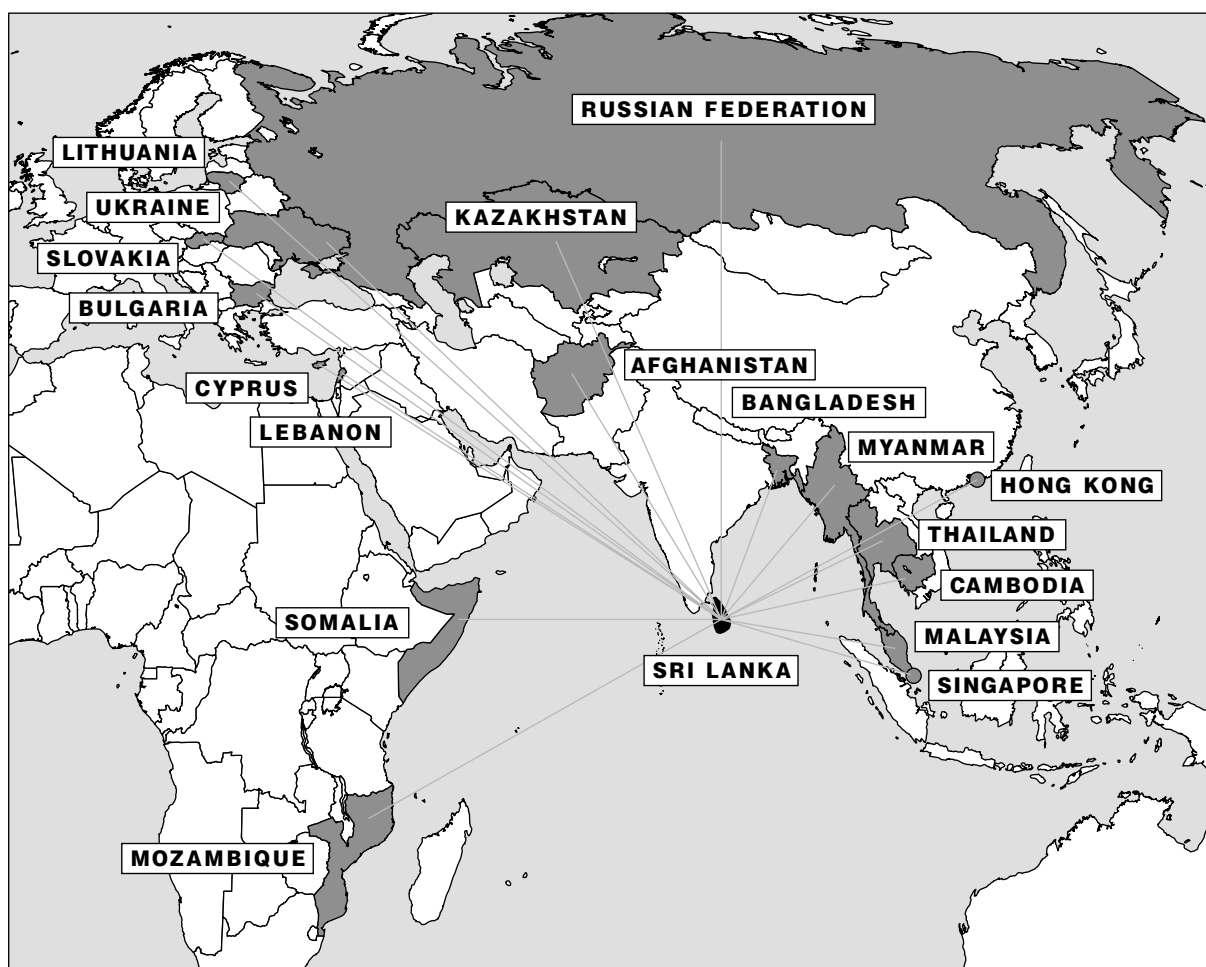
Since New Delhi's abandonment of covert support for the LTTE and their supporting networks following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian intelligence services have turned full circle and have attempted to limit the flow of weapons into Sri Lanka. Over time, the Sri Lankan security forces have managed to block entry points for weapons coming into the Jaffna peninsula. They now come directly into the 'uncleared' areas to the north of Trincomalee, and the Sea Tigers operate out of Sampur, which is the southern quadrant of Trincomalee harbour. On the eastern side of the island, weapons are entering via the Mannar peninsula.⁹

Cambodia became a major source of weapons in the mid-1990s, including surface-to-air missiles, probably SAM-7s, and the Ukraine is a growing source of supply, as it is in other parts of the world, especially Africa. On 29 April 1995, two BAe HS-748s delivering supplies to the remote military bases in the north were brought down by what was believed to be SAM-7s (though rumoured at the time to be Stinger surface-to-air missiles)¹⁰ (*Air Forces Monthly*, 1996).

Since the end of the Cold War, the LTTE has capitalized upon weapons that have become available on illegal arms markets generally, especially those that have emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ending of regional conflicts in other parts of the world. However, traditional networks in Cyprus, Hong Kong, Lebanon, and Singapore continue to be used. In addition, dealers in Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Slovakia, and the Ukraine offer weapons formerly under the control of the Warsaw Pact security sectors where corrupt and poorly-paid bureaucrats, sometimes in league with organized crime syndicates, offer weapons to any individual or organization willing to pay the required prices. There are also allegations that the LTTE has links with organized crime groups in Bulgaria, Lithuania, and the Russian Federation. Erstwhile war zones, such as Afghanistan, Cambodia, Mozambique, and the former Yugoslavia, provide another source (Bonner, 1998).

Entry points for LTTE weapons into the north and the east have varied according to the balance of power and territory. Control of Jaffna means, by and large, control by the LTTE of the entry points across the Jaffna peninsula. The LTTE is also thought to have developed entry points across the Palk Bay and, especially, the lagoon to the south of the peninsula.

Map 3 Trafficking routes to Sri Lanka



Page 12

Another surprising source of weapons for the LTTE has been the Sri Lankan government itself. Throughout the late 1980s, the Indian government became increasingly concerned about and involved in the Sri Lankan conflict.¹¹ Understanding the risks involved in direct intervention, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs instructed its High Commissioner in Colombo, Mani Dixit, to persuade the Sri Lankan government to 'invite' the Indian government to oversee the surrender of the LTTE through the introduction of a 'peacekeeping' force. Sri Lankan President Jayewardene signed the relevant accord on 29 July 1987 and opened the way for the deployment of Indian troops in Sri Lanka.¹² The Indian government also agreed to stop Tamil Nadu from being used as a base for the LTTE. However, the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, upon which the introduction of the IPKF was based, was deeply disadvantageous to

the government in Colombo and was based as much upon intervention as co-operation. This combined with a high level of perceived diffidence on the part of New Delhi, only served to increase resentment on the part of Sri Lanka. Such was the level of resentment on the part of the government towards the IPKF and the coercive diplomacy conducted by the Indian government that a decision was taken for the Sri Lankan government to provide the LTTE with weapons, though in what quantity is unclear.¹³

The IPKF was given responsibility to disarm the LTTE. Despite claims at the time by the Indian High Commission in Colombo that over 1,000 weapons had been collected from the LTTE, eyewitness reports suggest differently. Although the LTTE did collect a large number of weapons, they appear to have been cleaned, greased, packed, and buried rather than decommissioned (Gunaratna, 1993, pp. 219–20).

The IPKF developed and armed the Tamil National Army (TNA) to act as a puppet force in the north-east. When the IPKF left the region, the LTTE attacked the TNA and captured significant amounts of light weapons, including general-purpose machine guns (GPMG), light machine guns (LMG), handguns, Indian assault rifles, 81mm and 60mm mortars, and ammunition, though how much is unknown. In recent years, the LTTE has been able to rely much less upon international networks due to the capture of significant stocks of weapons from the SLA. 'Domestic procurement' by the LTTE is thought to have amounted to around 10,000 automatic weapons in the form of weapons captured from the SLA primarily, but also the IPKF and rival Tamil groups that the LTTE have all but eliminated.¹⁴ The current strength of the Sri Lankan armed forces is about 115,000, which suggests that the loss of 10,000 weapons to the LTTE is a very significant amount. Moreover, the LTTE are thought to be in possession of at least two assault rifles per member.¹⁵

The Sri Lankan government has also armed other Tamil groups, especially the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), which provides security for the government in and around the IDP camps around Vavuniya. During the 2001 election, the government attempted to disarm the EPDP, with little success.¹⁶ Moreover, the Memorandum of Understanding that underpins the current CFA states that the EPDP would be disarmed 30 days after the date of signature (D-day+30). Current information suggests that this has not been the case.¹⁷

The Sri Lankan security sector relies significantly upon SALW. On the one hand, the nature of the war and the tactics and strategy employed by the LTTE have required the development of counter-insurgency tactics. On the other, the procurement of advanced, major weapons systems has been constrained by cost and control. Many arms suppliers are now reluctant to supply weapons to countries in conflict or countries that are suspected of abusing human rights: the Sri Lankan government fits into both categories.

The armed forces primarily use the 7.62mm Type-54, a Chinese-made variant of the Soviet Tokarev. The FN-35 is also in use, but the source of these weapons is unknown. Sub-machine guns in service include the 9mm Sterling, the Heckler & Koch MP-5A3, and the 9mm Uzi, all of which are produced under licence by several countries and the countries of origin are unknown.¹⁸ However, it is probable that the main suppliers are China and Pakistan. The 5.56mm rifles in service include the FN-FNC, which is of Belgian origin, the obsolete SAR-80, which was purchased from Singapore, and variants of the M-16 (rifle and carbine) of US origin.¹⁹ The 7.62mm rifles include the SKS carbine, and the Type-56, the Chinese variant of the AK-47.²⁰ The police are thought to have been issued with L1-A1 self-loading rifles (SLR), of Australian origin, but refurbished and supplied by Singapore in 1984–85, and the Enfield .303, possibly procured from India (Ezell, 1988, p. 336). Machine guns in service include the 7.63mm FN-MAG and the 5.56mm Minimi, the Heckler & Koch HK-11 and HK-21, and

the Type-58.²¹ Close support weapons, specifically grenade launchers, in service are the HK-69A1 and the M-203, made in the US. It is not clear whether these weapons were purchased from the country of origin or not. Mortars, in the form of 82mm, 107mm, and 120mm M-40s, have been acquired, probably from the former Soviet Union.²²

The UN COMTRADE database also provides USD value data on SALW, imported by the Sri Lankan government (see Table 1, below). The data shows that the Sri Lankan government spent over USD 64 million on SALW and ammunition between 1996 and 2000. China and the Czech Republic were the most significant suppliers. This is a useful indication of the economic cost of the war against the LTTE and the way in which war costs have crowded out expenditures for development.

Table 1. Sale and transfer of SALW to the Sri Lankan government, 1996–2000 (USD)

| Product | Exporter | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | Total | Additional information |
|---|------------------------|---------|---------|------------|---------|-----------|------------------------------------|--|
| SALW other than ceremonial | USA | | | 207,000 | | | 207,000 | 144 units |
| | China | | | 3,796,000 | | | 3,796,000 | 50,002 units |
| | Czech Rep. | | | | | 237,000 | 237,000 | 148 tons |
| Military revolvers and pistols | Czech Rep. | 59,000 | 146,000 | 42,000 | 52,000 | 29,000 | 328,000 | |
| Shotguns, inc. shotgun-rifle combinations (some used by police) | Italy | 73,000 | 16,000 | 11,000 | 118,000 | 27,000 | 245,000 | 500 units |
| | China | | | 90,000 | | | 90,000 | |
| Munitions and ammunition | UK | 401,000 | 72,000 | | 11,000 | 22,000 | 506,000 | 9,986 tons 3 tons 6 tons 1,844 tons |
| | China | | | 48,267,000 | | | 48,267,000 | |
| | Turkey | | 280,000 | | | | 280,000 | |
| | Portugal Czech Rep. | | | 550,000 | | 9,835,000 | 550,000 9,835,000 | |

Source: UN COMTRADE database, Export Screening Tables, 1996–2000

At the time of writing, the LTTE and the government are still engaged in talks. Although there are constant allegations and counter-allegations by both sides regarding cease-fire violations, the peace process though stalled will almost certainly resume. Clearly, the decommissioning of weapons will eventually become a major feature of future peace talks, as has been the case in Northern Ireland. Also similar to the current situation in Northern Ireland, there are early indications that splits are emerging amongst the LTTE cadres. In the east, cadres are becoming rapidly criminalized and controlled by budding warlords and the incidence of kidnapping and extortion has grown significantly since the CFA was signed. Often the targets are wealthy Muslim traders, many of whom have made their fortunes during the conflict by exploiting business opportunities that emerged with the departure of Tamil traders.²³ This is sure to become a major area of tension in the future, much more so if and when Tamils begin to return. This may lead to splinter groups retaining their weapons, which in turn could become a future source of illegal weapons, both locally and nationally. It is widely thought and increasingly accepted that the LTTE is continuing to procure weapons and recruit and train soldiers.²⁴

III. SALW and sources of supply and support outside the theatre of conflict

Unlike many developing countries, Sri Lanka does have legislation in place to control firearms. The ability of the security forces to do this through the implementation of the legislation is, however, open to question. In addition, irrespective of how well this legislation is implemented, there remains a threat from the increasing availability of illegal weapons in both the north and the south of the island. A major source of weapons is thought to be the large number of government troops deserting from the north to the south. How many bring weapons and ordnance with them is open to question and speculation. Much less contested, however, is the extent to which they prove susceptible to making common cause with organized crime groups and political criminals.

Within Sri Lanka and outside the main theatre of conflict, the availability of illegal SALW is becoming an issue of some significance (see Box 'Estimating the scale of small arms stockpiles in Sri Lanka'). At the outset, it should be recognized that Sri Lanka has in place legislation to control the ownership and use of firearms. The *Firearms Ordinance* dates back to 1916, the *Offensive Weapons Act* was passed in 1966, and the *Firearms Act* was most recently amended in 1996. Obviously, there is a major difference between extant legislation and its successful and effective implementation. However, and especially when compared with other developing countries, existing legislation provides an excellent platform for joining the UN *Firearms Protocol*, should the government so wish.

Page 15

Yet, there is some evidence that firearms control legislation is being eroded by the influx of illegal weapons and explosives. One of the most severe problems outside the theatre of conflict is the influx and activities of deserters from the security forces. This has been a problem now for several years. Prior to the CFA, conditions were difficult for ordinary soldiers. Equipment in the field is often sub-standard and old-fashioned, which has given the LTTE a distinct edge and sapped the morale of the regular forces. The evacuation of wounded soldiers, for example, took on average the best part of a day as opposed to a few hours, which should be the norm.²⁵ For troops on the ground, the LTTE and its sophisticated guerrilla tactics created extreme conditions of service, which led to increased rates of desertion. The change in LTTE tactics in 2000 increased the number of casualties sustained by the army and lowered morale considerably.

Estimating the scale of small arms stockpiles in Sri Lanka

Although ready to share information about the military capabilities of the LTTE, the government of Sri Lanka is more reticent about the scale of its own small arms stockpiles or those held by civilians. Only a trickle of information has reached the public—much of it questionable. A better understanding of the scale of small arms availability in Sri Lanka becomes a critical issue, as the country moves toward post-conflict reconstruction and the rebuilding of the institutions of civil society.

The Sri Lankan government armed forces: The Sri Lankan military's stockpile is the least difficult to evaluate. According to the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the Ministry of Defence controls a total of 157,900 regular uniformed personnel (IISS,

2002, p. 135). Applying an orthodox military small arms multiplier of 2.25 small arms per soldier, sailor and airman, these forces would have approximately 355,000 military small arms. The Ministry of Defence administers two other organizations, the *Home Guard* and the *National Armed Reserve*. Both are not particularly well understood.

According to one source, the Home Guards are composed primarily of poorly-educated Sinhalese villagers with little or no military training (Blood, 1990). They carry shotguns issued by the government. The Home Guards are believed to have regularly exceeded their original mandate of self-defence by initiating retribution killings against Tamils. By April 1987, there were reportedly 12,000 Home Guards in Sri Lanka, and the National Security Council, had announced its intention of increasing the number to 20,000. Following the agreement of the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord in July (1987), the government sought to dismantle the Home Guards and many in the north and east were ordered to surrender their weapons. By August, the police claimed to have collected 8,000 of the more than 10,000 shotguns that had been issued three years earlier. When the conflict resumed in late 1987, however, the government reportedly reversed its decision and allowed a partial rearming of the force.

Even less is known about the National Armed Reserve (NAR) or National Guard. This is a locally-recruited force raised by an act of parliament in 1985 called the National Armed Manpower Unit Act to supplement the manpower of the regular army (*TamilNet*, 2003). Its size is estimated by the IISS at roughly 15,000 personnel. Observations from the field suggest that the figures for the Home Guard and NAR are low, but they are used here as conservative estimates. Assuming both the Home Guards and the National Armed Reserve are fully armed, they contribute at least a possible, additional 79,000 small arms.

The Police: In the late 1980s, the Sri Lankan police force was believed to include as many as 28,000 sworn personnel (Blood, 1990). It has since expanded, especially through the addition of a dedicated paramilitary anti-guerrilla unit, the *Special Task Force*. Using the conventional police multiplier of 1.2 small arms per sworn officer suggests a total police arsenal of 34,000 small arms. The actual figure may be larger, reflecting the exigencies of civil war.

Privately-owned and controlled firearms: Civilian weapons inventories are especially elusive. Sri Lankan law requires registration of privately-owned firearms, but this law appears to be almost universally ignored. In 2001, the Minister of the Interior, John Anaratunga, estimated the unregistered civilian stockpile at 20,000 guns (Subramanian, 2001). Assuming this is a large part of the total civilian inventory, it would make Sri Lanka perhaps the least-armed country in the world. Adversely, the actual total might resemble the level of ten firearms for every 100 residents, a level seen in India and much of Southeast Asia. Assuming this ratio, in theory, Sri Lanka could have approximately 1,900,000 civilian firearms (Small Arms Survey, 2002).

Because the country has been at war for two decades, the civilian arsenal could be assumed to be especially large. Among the civilian stockpile are small arms lost by combatants on both sides. A huge number of soldiers, moreover, have deserted from the army since the beginning of the war in 1983. An estimated 51,000 soldiers are believed to have left their posts during the conflict (*Sri Lanka Army Online*, 2003). In various years, up to 20 per cent of positions had to be filled. Many of the weapons issued to soldiers who then desert, may still be at large, sold or hidden.

The LTTE: Although insurgents are typically the most secretive of all major actors considered, their stockpiles are often the easiest to estimate. With a conservative estimated active strength of 7,000 combatants, the LTTE can be expected to have a standard arsenal of 14,000 small arms (based on a conventional multiplier of two small arms per guerrilla). These weapons stockpiles tend to be extremely well controlled. Like other parties in the Sri Lankan war, it is possible that they have considerably more weapons. Widespread reports leave no doubt that the LTTE has continued to smuggle munitions since the current cease-fire began.

In addition, because the government has offered frequent amnesties, particularly when recruitment rates have been low, desertion has come to be used as a means of disappearing during harvest time or whenever the individual concerned is needed by the family or community. If troops desert without taking personal weapons with them and have not committed crimes, they are free to take advantage of periodic amnesties. If, however, they desert with weapons and ammunition, they risk certain court martial upon their return. Moreover, those who desert with weapons are unlikely to return to their homes and villages for fear of arrest. Instead, they tend to link up with organized crime groups and the burgeoning criminal underworld, mainly based in and around Colombo. They also readily find employment with private security firms. Quite how many deserters disappear with their personal weapons is unclear. Some reports suggest that this is widespread, while others disagree. Those who disagree argue that smuggling a personal weapon from a zone of conflict to the south is difficult and would also draw attention to the fact that a soldier was deserting rather than embarking on home leave. Whilst this may hold for personal weapons, the opposite may be true of grenades. It is thought that some deserters misrepresent the number of grenades they have used in the field and conceal the surplus to take away when deserting. Certainly, the number of violent crimes committed using grenades is on the increase and is linked to rising rates of desertion, which is in turn linked to rising rates of violent crime.²⁶

Armed deserters are thought to be at the heart of Sri Lanka's current crime wave. Apart from becoming opportunistic criminals, they also attach themselves to organized crime groups and political figureheads, to act as bodyguards and enforcers. Organized crime groups are firmly in control of gambling in Colombo. Violence around elections is a major problem, together with levels of political violence generally. Media reports indicate that criminals have benefited from access to illegal SALW. The police reaction has been tardy, and when the ranks are boosted with recruits, they are usually deployed in the north, leaving little extra capacity to fight crime elsewhere. Also, large numbers of police are required to protect senior politicians—such politicians are given 20 officers each from the VIP security division. However, politicians also maintain their own security units, often staffed by deserters.²⁷

The use of the Type-56 (the Chinese version of the AK-47) by criminals has become particularly pronounced (see Table 2, below). In all, 161 offences were committed during 2000 using a Type-56, the majority of which were murder. The use of explosives was also significant, including landmines and hand grenades. The cost of an illegal Type-56 is about USD 200.²⁸ The use of sawn-off shotguns is now rare.²⁹ How much the figures for 2000 represent a rise against other years is impossible to say, as the police have only just started to collate information. These figures do not include or reflect trends in crime in the north-east. Observers worry that the visibility of weapons and the longevity of the main conflict are having a serious and brutalizing effect upon Sri Lankan society as a whole. Increasingly,

violence is used as an arbiter, to substitute for the failure of governance. There is a system for licensing weapons through permits obtained from the Defence Ministry. The Dangerous Weapons Act permits judges to hand out sentences of up to ten years to those contravening it, but sentences are usually much more lenient.

Table 2. Percentage use of Type-56 assault rifles in crimes committed using firearms and explosives, 2000³⁰

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| January | 50% |
| February | 47% |
| March | 16% |
| April | 28% |
| May | 7% |
| June | 18% |
| July | 24% |
| August | 22% |
| September | 14% |
| October | 17% |
| November | 55% |
| December | 41% |

Source: Sri Lankan police, Colombo, February 2001

The upsurge in organized crime mirrors the overall increase in levels of violence across the country. There is general agreement now that Sri Lanka has become an extremely violent society.³¹ Organized crime has become involved in large-scale robbery, extortion, contract and revenge killings, inter-gang violence, drug trafficking, and illegal arms sales. Army deserters that are well trained, armed, and experienced in combat are very useful front-line employees for organized crime networks. This involves the provision of 'protection' to drug dealers, illicit business practices, including vice, and support for corrupt politicians. Organized crime networks are used by the business community to 'settle' disputes, eject unwanted tenants, and apply force during the control of government auctions. They are protected by politicians, senior police officers—some of whom have been put in place by the gangs themselves—and powerful business interests.³² There are now more than 15 organized crime gangs operating in and around Colombo, each containing an average of ten members each, all involved in serious crime, including contract killing, extortion, and drug trafficking. Between 1990 and 1995, gang murders averaged 5.5 per year. Between 1999 and 2000, the annual average increased to 33.8 per year.³³

The growth of organized crime in Sri Lanka is interwoven with the growth in political violence, especially during election campaigns. The origins of organized crime date back to 1988, during the JVP insurrection in the south of the country, which claimed almost as many lives as the civil war in the north. During this period, the government provided weapons to politicians, mainly Browning 9mm pistols, for their bodyguards. No record was kept of these weapons and, despite requests, none of the 11,000 weapons distributed were returned after the conflict ended.³⁴

The arming of politicians and their bodyguards is thought to have contributed to political violence, especially around the time of elections. During the 2001 general election campaign, there were 2,734 incidents of election-related violence. The first three weeks of the campaign saw double the number of incidents compared with the previous year. Of the major incidents, three per cent involved murder, five per cent attempted murder, 31 per cent assault, and three per cent grievous bodily harm. The number of incidents involving firearms also reflected a sharp increase over the campaign of the previous year—in the Central Province: 60 incidents in 2001 compared with 37 in 2000. In the Western Province, 103 in 2001 compared with 96 in 2000. In the Southern Province, 121 incidents in 2001 compared with 41 in 2000; and in the North Eastern Province, 87 in 2001 compared with 35 in 2000 (Centre for Monitoring Election Violence, 2002, p. 30). The increase in firearms-related incidents is consistent with the prevailing view that more illegal SALW are now available across the country.

There is also a small threat from legal firearms that become illegal. As in the case of the weapons issued to politicians, weapons issued for personal protection do not tend to be returned when those in need of protection retire. Farmers who are given temporary firearms licences do not always surrender their weapons when their licences expire (Smith, 2003).

The main sources of illegal weapons in the south are, therefore, the armed forces and the government. The LTTE at present keeps a firm control over its stocks and caches of weapons and leakage is thought to be minimal. One possible entry point for illegal weapons from abroad other than those intended for the LTTE is the west coast, above Colombo.

Current reports from the east of the country, especially around Batticaloa, suggest a sharp increase in the incidence of LTTE criminal activity, kidnapping, and extortion in particular, following the CFA (University Teachers for Human Rights, 2002). The targets are often rich Muslim businessmen and, as a result, tension between Hindus and Muslims is increasing. It has been suggested that Muslim groups in the east have received weapons from Libya (Smith, 2003). This may be the first indication that the cohesion and discipline that has characterized the LTTE cadres is under threat. If this is the case, the security of the LTTE armouries may also come under threat, which will in turn have profound implications for the availability of illegal SALW across the country and the potential impact upon human security.

Another indication of growing levels of violence and insecurity is reflected in the country's suicide rates. Many believe that suicide rates are high because of the duration of the civil war. Sri Lanka has one of the world's highest suicide rates, over 55 per 100,000 people—well above the average, which ranges between ten and 25 per 100,000. This rate has jumped dramatically over the past half century—from 6.5 in 1950 to 9.9 in 1960, 19.1 in 1970, 35.1 in 1980, 43.3 in 1993, and to the current estimate of more than 55. There has also been a significant change in the age of those committing suicide. In 1950–60, the highest rate was recorded among older people—above 55 years—but in the next decade the group aged 30–55 years recorded the highest rate. Since 1970, the highest rate has been among young people of 15–30 years and, in the 1980s, suicides among even younger children have started to increase (Gunathileke, 2001).

IV. The social and humanitarian cost and impact of illegal SALW in the north and east

Whereas major weapons systems are the technological embodiment of conventional warfare, SALW have now come to be seen as a category of their own. The so-called 'new wars' that have shaped the security landscape of the post-Cold War era relied almost entirely upon uncontrolled and generally illegal or poorly controlled SALW. It has even been suggested, though perhaps too starkly, given recent events in South Asia and the Middle East, that these 'new wars' signify the end of Clausewitzian war in the form of warfare between two states for clearly defined political aims where victory is discernible and absolute (Kaldor, 1999; Muggah and Griffiths, 2002).

Clearly, however, a major transformation did take place during the final decade of the twentieth century. It was also accompanied by a profound increase in levels of insecurity for civilians unfortunate enough to be in close proximity to violence or who were even targets in their own right. Here, the weapons of both choice and necessity were SALW, these being the only weapons appropriate for untrained and disorganized associations that were frequently responsible for injury and death on a massive scale.

The humanitarian impact of these conflicts was often immense. Levels of violence, both structural and direct, were often extreme, leading to a surge in refugee numbers across borders and within countries. Add to this the legacy of landmines, the international debt crisis, and the imposed solutions that followed, and the full scale of the humanitarian impact becomes clear.

Individuals are directly affected by SALW, to a greater or lesser extent, before, during, and after conflict. It has been estimated that over 310,000 people are killed by SALW each year (Small Arms Survey, 2002). The impact of conflicts and wars that utilize SALW goes far beyond the casualties that are a direct result. More widespread humanitarian impacts can be identified beyond the theatre of war. Internal and external displacement leads to a loss of employment and other entitlements—crops go unplanted, harvests are ungathered, jobs are lost, trading networks collapse, and local economies fall apart. In IDP and refugee camps, employment opportunities may be sporadic or non-existent. Camps may be militarized and violent, with commensurately high levels of human insecurity, especially for women.³⁵

Humanitarian agencies faced major and continuing challenges during the post-Cold War era. For the most part, the challenges were operational. In addition, however, the development community as a profession, of which the humanitarian aid community is a sub-set, was compelled to develop a better professional understanding of how to address issues and challenges pertaining to conflict and security. Once it became clear that development cannot occur where conflict and insecurity exist, the development community had broken entirely new ground (Muggah and Batchelor, 2002). Addressing the humanitarian impact of SALW is, therefore, a significant part of this ongoing effort.

The civil war in Sri Lanka lasted a little less than two decades and caused the death of 65,000 people, of whom two-thirds were civilians and not active in the war effort on either side. Whilst the overall theatre of conflict has been largely confined to the north and east of the island, the sub-theatres have fluctuated as the government forces have lost and regained control over areas of territory. In many instances, civilians have been forced to leave their homes, towns, and villages and have become internally displaced, compelled to live out their lives in extreme poverty and insecurity. In the Jaffna peninsula particularly, the humanitarian impact has been especially pronounced, although the peace process brings a major

opportunity to begin a return to normalcy, development, and security. In Sri Lanka as a whole, there are 706,500 IDPs, mostly in the Vanni and the Jaffna peninsula (*World Press*, 2002).

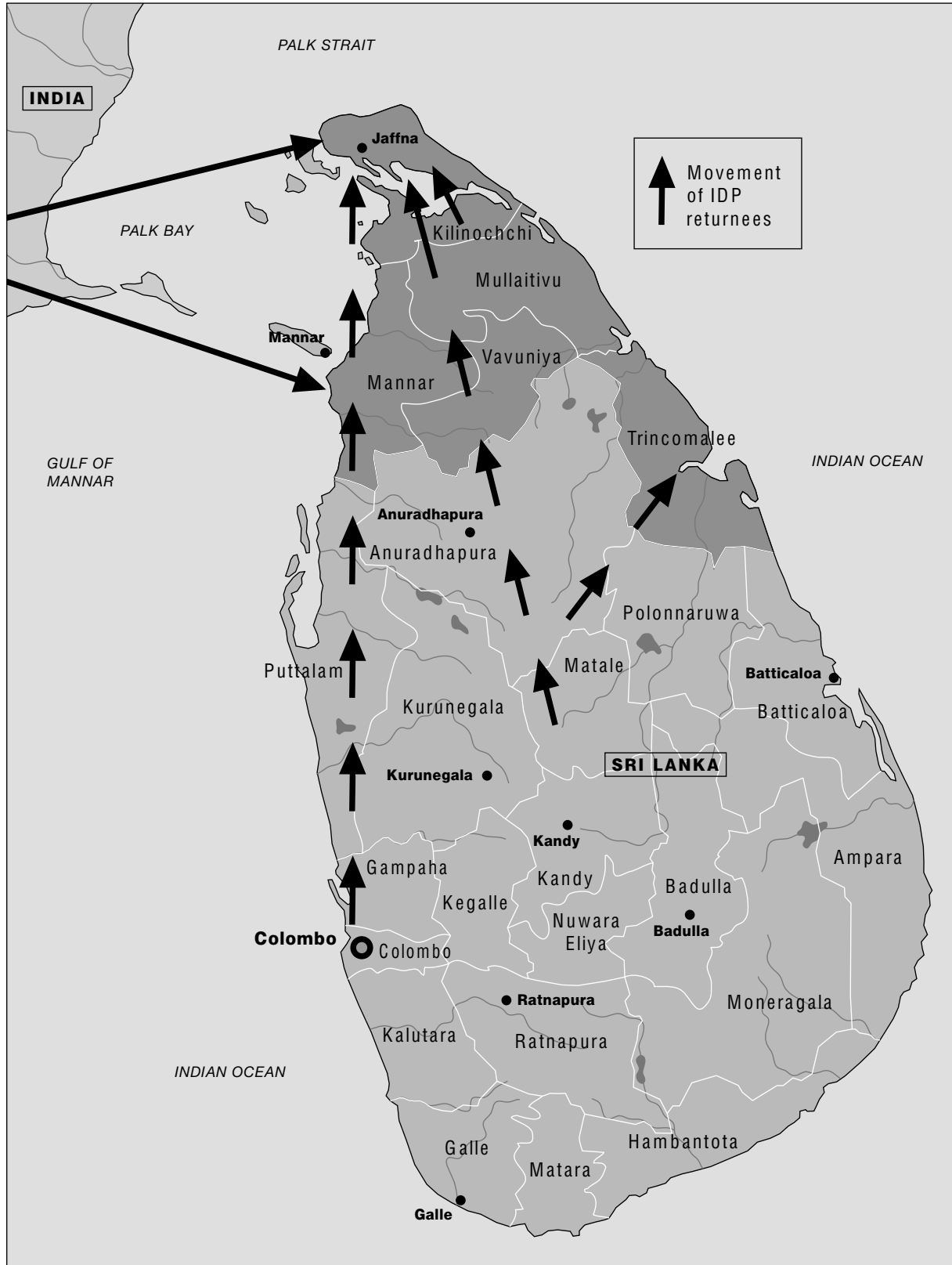
Those unfortunate enough to be caught between the armed forces and the LTTE have received uncompromising treatment from both sides. The armed forces have, on countless occasions, been accused of human rights abuses.³⁶ The LTTE has consistently recruited child soldiers, as young as pre-teen, though this may have increased in scale and number only over the past three years. Indeed, even though the peace process proceeds apace, the LTTE is still using enforced recruitment, though perhaps less so with children under 16. Also, the LTTE reached a verbal agreement with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the cessation of child recruitment in June 2002 (Harrison, 2002).

The north and east of Sri Lanka have also experienced major anti-personnel landmine problems, though perhaps less dramatic than originally thought. As the peace process took shape, many closely acquainted with the theatre of conflict predicted a landmine crisis similar to Cambodia and Mozambique. More recently, however, reports are more sanguine. It would seem that the SLA has been able to provide extremely helpful and accurate reports of where anti-personnel minefields have been laid. The LTTE use of landmines was always more eclectic. However, the so-called 'Johnny Mines' are powered and triggered by ordinary batteries, which renders them useless when the battery loses power—an ingenious and probably accidental development of a low technology 'smart' mine.³⁷

It is often the case that local and international NGOs are adversely affected by continuing levels of violence and insecurity. However, this is not the case in Sri Lanka. The NGO community involved in the conflict has suffered little, psychologically or physically. Most international NGOs are based in Colombo, an extremely agreeable city where many NGO workers and their families feel very comfortable. A grenade attack upon the Oxfam offices in 1999, allegedly by the extremist Sinhala Urumaya or by the military, did not cause great harm and was probably intended to intimidate rather than kill or maim and, overall, was the exception that proved the rule. In the zone of conflict, organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have managed to maintain a working relationship with both sides. Neither side wishes to see NGO representatives killed or wounded. In particular, the LTTE would have realized that this would add to arguments in favour of its international proscription. Prior to the CFA, there were very few foreign nationals resident in Jaffna and other centres affected by the conflict. Most were based in Colombo and relied upon field visits to administer aid and relief programmes.

The following case studies report on the humanitarian situation in a number of IDP camps across the theatre of conflict. In them it will become evident that the availability of illegal SALW to the LTTE insurgents contributed in a major way to the length of the war. Had these weapons not been available, a negotiated settlement, such as the process currently under way, would probably have occurred much sooner. Because this was allowed not to happen and because of the nature of the war, innocent individuals became caught in the crossfire, both literally and metaphorically. As roads, towns, and villages became absorbed into the theatre of conflict, the local population were subjected to forced recruitment (including children), illegal taxation/extortion, and, especially, physical displacement. For the displaced, there were few places to go. Some found shelter with extended family members who lived elsewhere. Some were able to migrate to Colombo, the capital, or further to Tamil Nadu, or abroad—there is a surprisingly high proportion of Tamils in Colombo, which is a direct result of the conflict. For many, however, these choices were not available and the IDP camps became the sole option. Although the camps are now breaking up as a result of the peace process, many IDPs have been displaced for a decade or more. Within the camps, the poverty is often extreme, and many inmates are in a poor state of health

Map 4 Sri Lanka IDP returnee movements



and are deprived of basic needs, conditions that have built up and intensified over time. The following sections describe these conditions in detail. It would seem that the camps visited are neither conduits nor repositories for illegal weapons. However, this does not mean that the IDPs are unaffected. On the contrary, there are many direct impacts that can be identified.

Jaffna

IDP Fact File—Jaffna

- 235,000 below 19 years of age in a population of 502,356
- 137,814 persons displaced, of which 17,669 live in 144 welfare centres
- 2,100 children currently reside in government welfare centres
- 19,000 registered widows
- Government resettlement efforts: 226,117 families resettled among the 309,260 returnees
- Massive destruction of infrastructure, especially in Thenmaradchchi
- Economic marginalization
- Mass exodus and displacement of skilled workers

Source: UNICEF (2003)

The Jaffna peninsula is the region most hard hit by the conflict. Local government data indicates that 119,025 people are displaced in the Jaffna district. An estimated 3,303 families of 12,289 people live in welfare centres (District Planning Secretariat/Government Agent, 2002a). In addition, there are 66,000 refugees in southern India, mainly Tamil Nadu (*World News*, 2002). The IDP camps scattered around Jaffna are populated by Tamils whose lives were made intolerable by either the LTTE, the armed forces of the government, or both. Young Tamil children, often orphans, have been systematically recruited by the LTTE since the mid-1980s. Dubbed 'Birds of Freedom', many are reportedly trained as suicide bombers as they may better evade government security. In October 1999, 49 children, including 32 girls aged between 11 and 15 years of age, were among the 140 LTTE cadres killed in a battle with the security forces at Ampakamam in the north (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001). Equally, the government forces—especially in areas where the Sri Lankan Navy is deployed—are frequently cited by human rights organizations for abuses against civilians, often against those detained under the *Prevention of Terrorism Act* (Human Rights Watch, various dates).

The IDP camps are beginning to break up as families take advantage of the CFA and return to their villages. Although extant anti-personnel landmines laid by both sides present a major security threat to returning IDPs, there is great enthusiasm for leaving camps that have been home for over ten years in some cases. The Konapulam camp at Tellipallai was established in 1990 when the occupants arrived en masse, as a community, and were charged an admission fee of USD 3.00 (LKR300) to enter the camp. They moved from an 'uncleared' (i.e. LTTE occupied) area when the SLA arrived to challenge LTTE control and none has seen their village since. The village consisted of 11 families that were farming about five acres each for vegetables and cash crops, especially onions. The SLA took these crops for their own use when it arrived. Since the IDPs arrived in the camp they have been unable to fish

or grow food. Drinking water is difficult to access. The men are able to work, buying and selling fish, doing manual labour, and some have started their own businesses.

The relationship between the IDPs and the SLA appears relatively benign. There are now some 64 families in the camp. The army does arrive sometimes to check identity papers, but never enters the houses. The camp occupants are sometimes used by the army for free labour—clearing and building, for example—and the occupants are threatened if they fail to appear. Although the soldiers always come to the camps armed, the weapons are never used. There are no weapons in the camp, although, on one occasion, villagers found grenades in a well. These were reported to the army, who removed and disposed of them. The military have prevented camp occupants from returning to their villages. When the IDPs do return home, they will confront new security threats. Looting will be a major problem and they expect looters to be armed. However, the greatest security threat is the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance.³⁸

At Skandva camp, in Skandvarodaya, which houses around 60 families, displacement has been a common occurrence since 1985. The IDPs were forced to leave their village on four separate occasions, the most recent being in 1999, after a week of continuous shelling. Since then, it had not been possible to return prior to the CFA, as the village continues to be in the line of fire from both sides. In more peaceful times, the village supports a variety of horticulture, including chillies, yams, onions, and tobacco, and some work for artisans, especially carpentry and masonry. When the village was abandoned, the SLA moved in, ostensibly to search for weapons but possibly to loot as well.

Page 24

Several villagers were beaten by the army because they left the village without their identity cards. However, since inside the camp, the army has not worried the IDPs. The camp council provides a buffer between the army and the occupants. Some still have not received identity cards. Nevertheless, the men have been able to find work outside the camp—labouring, toddy tapping, carpentry, and firewood cutting—and they tend to mix well with the local community. The government is committed to providing rations every four weeks, but they do not arrive regularly.³⁹ In terms of nutrition, families can only eat two meals a day if the men work or the women work on the farms. If there is no access to work, due to rains, for example, it is sometimes difficult to eat even one meal a day.

Health care is a major problem in the camp. There is fear for the long-term health of the youngest generation, which is not growing up in a secure or healthy environment. Health workers are supposed to visit every month to bring medicines, but often do not appear, sometimes for three months at a time. The nearest hospital is 8km from the camp and bicycle is the only mode of transport.

Despite adverse conditions and entrenched poverty, education is a high priority within the camps. This is particularly strong amongst Tamil communities and across Sri Lanka as a whole, where literacy rates are as high as anywhere in the world at around 90 per cent, including women, but theatres of conflict, especially 'uncleared' areas, have much lower literacy rates (Price, 2000). Finding money to cover education costs, school uniforms, and books is extremely difficult and some parents admitted to keeping their children out of school to avoid the obvious comparisons with the less poor local children. The government makes a contribution only towards uniforms, and provides no support for exercise books and other materials.

The IDPs feel that there is a degree of safety and security within the camp. Basic needs are met. The camp council is there to address any intra-camp disputes that may occur, which sometimes turn violent. However, as the CFA agreement continues to hold, there is a sense of anticipation over the

prospect of being able to return home. Yet, at the same time, there are a number of reasons for anxiety. Land disputes will be inevitable. Nobody knows what will be the condition of the wells, roads, and water supplies. They expect problems from local criminals, whom they fear will be armed with assault rifles and pistols. The police are also viewed as too corrupt to maintain law and order.

Unemployment will be high, because the infrastructure will have collapsed. Almost certainly, the sheet metal factory and the cement factory will be closed and will need outside financial aid if they are to reopen.

Above all, however, the IDPs are concerned about the threat from landmines, because their village is close to a high-security zone. At least four people have already lost limbs collecting firewood. The IPKF laid mines, which the villagers cleared and returned to the peacekeepers, who promptly relaid them. Both the LTTE and the SLA have also laid mines. The IDPs are adamant that they will not return to the village until all landmines have been cleared, especially from the fields.⁴⁰

The IDP camp at Palani Koliladdy is relatively small. It was started two years ago by displaced families, who had been forced to leave their village by heavy shelling. The camp is rudimentary and prone to flooding (as Jaffna has two monsoon seasons a year). Employment around the camp is difficult. The camp occupants do not possess the skills for harvesting and, as a result, employment as domestic servants is the best they can hope for and relations with the host communities are not good. Government food rations do arrive, but families of five or more suffer, as the quantities provided are inadequate, although it is not often they have to go without food completely. All children in the camp attend school, but the familiar inability to purchase materials is also present. Some are reliant upon remittances from abroad. Overall, the security forces leave this camp alone and relations with the army are considered to be good.

The ability to exploit natural resources to supplement both diet and income is clearly missed. Back in their villages of origin, many could double their income this way and could also supplement their diets. However, there is some concern about returning, even though there are no known problems with landmines. The village well has been badly damaged, having been crushed by an army bulldozer. Many houses have been destroyed and local return or resettlement will be a major endeavour. The village will be looking for compensation from the government. However, many of the villagers are labourers, so work will be available through reconstruction programmes.

Nutrition among the IDPs in the camps around Jaffna is also a concern. There are visible signs of significant malnutrition and inadequate intake of the 1,805 calories per day that are required as a minimum average food intake.⁴¹ They also almost certainly fall into the ultra-poor category of people who spend 80 per cent of their money on food but only acquire 80 per cent of the food intake required to prevent malnutrition. There are other possible areas of concern. Several IDPs hinted at the mental and emotional stress of living in an IDP camp for ten years in some cases. There were also signs of intra-camp violence and alcohol abuse. Many IDP camps in other countries are havens for sexual exploitation of women and minors and it would be surprising if there were no examples of such practice in these camps.

On the positive side, the Jaffna IDP camps do not appear to suffer from forced recruitment by the LTTE. They also do not seem to harbour illegal weapons, witnessed by the way in which the security forces appear to respect family spaces. The relatively comfortable relationship that the IDPs share with the security forces is also noteworthy.

Although Tamils have always placed the highest possible emphasis upon education, there has clearly been a fall in output and quality in recent years.⁴² One of the most significant scholastic losses is the complete destruction—by the government—of Jaffna library, which before it was burnt to the ground was the world's largest and most important repository for Tamil literature and writings. At a more prosaic level, there is now a distinct shortage of primary and English school teachers, especially in rural areas. The schools are poorly equipped—some classes take place under rudimentary corrugated iron structures with no equipment. Before the conflict, 200,507 students studied in primary and secondary institutions. There are now 430 schools with 127,809 students and 5,705 teachers (District Planning Secretariat/Government Agent, 2000a). It has proved extremely difficult to hire and retain qualified teaching staff, due to the security situation and displacements. Schools have not been compensated for damages and losses. The University of Jaffna and the Technical College continue to function, but only just.

The situation within the health sector in the Jaffna peninsula is less certain. In the rural areas, most of the medical and paramedical personnel are no longer in their posts. Buildings, machinery, and equipment have been abandoned. The UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, and the UNHCR have gone some way to redressing the situation through the provision of vehicles and medical equipment. MSF is largely responsible for the provision of health care in the 'uncleared' areas. The LTTE have their own doctors and surgeons who are well qualified and do good work. MSF is allowed by the LTTE to move patients from 'uncleared' to 'cleared' areas.⁴³

The dilapidated state of the health sector has led to a marked decrease in in-patients and a dramatic increase in out-patients, in the teaching hospital at least (see Table 3). This is a useful indicator for explaining the decline in health care. Many hospitals are significantly understaffed. Jaffna is not a popular location for Sri Lankan health-care workers and many of the available posts remain unfilled. Quite apart from the poor professional conditions, there is always the possibility that medical workers might be 'called upon' to treat LTTE casualties. For those in need of medical attention, most are forced to remain as out-patients, because there are no staff to care for those in need of hospital beds.

Table 3. Jaffna Teaching Hospital in- and out-patients, 1993–2000

| | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Out-patients | 316,649 | 333,865 | 222,636 | n/a | 263,788 | 566,877 | 643,515 | 677,885 |
| In-patients | 366,782 | 381,253 | 275,442 | n/a | 224,392 | 285,418 | 302,519 | 281,938 |

n/a: not available from data source

Source: District Planning Secretariat/Government Agent (2000b, p. 75)

For the north-east as a whole, the number of in-patients dropped significantly from 1,162,377 in 1998 to 405,622 in 1999 (Planning Secretariat, North East Province, 2001, p. 207). The ability of the medical services to respond to the needs of the people is hampered by staff shortages, which are due to posts not being advertised, difficulties associated with security clearance, and the quality of life in the Jaffna peninsula. Predictably, the main shortages are amongst the senior and more specialized posts (see Annex 1). The relevance of this shortfall is straightforward. The infrastructure around the Jaffna peninsula is in extremely poor condition and, until recently, the population had great difficulty in moving around, especially to urban areas where hospital facilities are available. Given that teaching

hospitals usually provide relatively high standards of care and treatment for conditions that often cannot be covered by standard hospitals, the clear absence of staff and facilities amounts to a significant shortfall in medical entitlements. Not all the trends are adverse, however. Statistics on deaths caused by slow foetal growth, foetal malnutrition, and disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight decreased by around 50 per cent between 1997 and 2000 (Planning Secretariat, North East Province, 2001; District Planning Secretariat/Government Agent, 2002b, p. 82).

Although the situation in the Jaffna peninsula currently looks better than at any time since 1983, it is difficult to be optimistic about the pace of reconstruction. The duration of the war and the intensity of the fighting in and around Jaffna have had a dramatic impact on human security throughout the region. Although the A9 highway is now open, the infrastructure available to transport aid is insufficient. It will take enormous amounts of time and effort to deliver aid and humanitarian assistance to the most needy areas. Meanwhile, people will continue to suffer.

Above all, however, this long and drawn out civil war has bequeathed to the Jaffna peninsula a major and potentially catastrophic problem regarding unmarked anti-personnel landmines. The SLA laid major minefields to the south-west of Jaffna. It also mined the perimeters of the public buildings it occupied, such as schools.⁴⁴ It has few if any reliable maps of its minefields, although there are other reports that suggest that the opposite is true. The Sri Lankan sappers are not famed for their concentration and application as mine clearers. The LTTE has also laid its own landmines, many of them indigenously-produced 'Johnny' mines, which are made of wood and are extremely difficult to detect. However, as noted earlier, other reports suggest that the LTTE home-made mines are powered by domestic batteries and present no threat to civilians once the batteries have run down. The LTTE is thought to be clearing its own landmines in the 'uncleared' areas. The international effort to begin the long process of mine clearance has started, but inauspiciously. Already, the Jaffna district had twice the number of hand and leg disabilities (1,149) in 1999 than other districts (District Planning Secretariat/Government Agent, 2002b, p. 211). Five per cent of the population in the north-east is estimated to have hand and foot disabilities.⁴⁵

The main areas affected are found in the Valikalam area of Jaffna district, where there are an estimated 100,000–150,000 extant landmines, 20km² and about seven per cent of the area is extremely suspect, and many of the minefields might also be booby-trapped. The types of mine that need to be cleared are the Pakistani P-4, the Chinese Type-72, and the Italian VS-50. Regular landmines far outnumber the 'Johnny' mines laid by the LTTE. The P-4 and the Type-72, in particular, have a very low metal content, which makes them more difficult to detect. Most of the minefields in the Jaffna region were laid by the army in 1995 to protect the airfield and port. Themmarachchi and Chavakachcheri are also major areas of concern, especially when the 170,000 IDPs start to return.⁴⁶ However, international support for demining has already started. The UNDP has recently completed a major Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping exercise, but actual clearances have been hampered by the need to retrain dogs to adapt to local conditions.

Trincomalee

IDP Fact File—Trincomalee

- Total population: 350,000
- Approximately ten per cent of the land is LTTE controlled
- Approximately ten per cent is considered a grey area
- Restrictions imposed on the transportation of consumer items
- 13 welfare centres with 11,713 IDPs
- Large number of IDPs gone to India
- Primary occupations are paddy cultivation, fishing, and manual labour
- High number of war widows and orphans
- Schools occupied and mined by armed forces
- Lack of teachers and other educational resources hindering proper education

Source: UNICEF (2003)

Trincomalee is the second-largest natural harbour in Asia, second only to Subic Bay in the Philippines. It is of enormous potential strategic and economic value if the infrastructure can be adequately developed, in particular an efficient road and/or rail link to Colombo. Amongst the donor community the Asia Development Bank, the World Bank, and Japan are the most interested in its development. At present, the government is in partial control of Trincomalee, but the LTTE control the area to the south of the harbour.

The east coast is ethnically more diverse than the Jaffna peninsula. It is also an area of considerable ethnic tension. A large number of Tamils have left the region, abandoning in the process farms and businesses. The vacuum has been filled by Muslim traders, whom the Tamils believe to have profited at their expense. The duration of the conflict has exacerbated tensions between the two groups, and this is now becoming a significant problem that threatens to get worse. Abductions of wealthy Muslim businessmen are on the increase and even small traders and fishermen are unsafe.⁴⁷ Tamils are beginning to return to their abandoned farms and villages. However, this is bound to create significant disputes over land ownership, as is so often the case in post-conflict environments.

The Trincomalee district has a number of IDP camps. One of the largest is Nalaveli Welfare Centre, about 10km north of Trincomalee, which houses 119 families. Most of the families are from the area, as Nalaveli is very close to an 'uncleared' area, to the north of the camp. However, the 'cleared' area around the camp is being returned to farmland, which is providing a source of employment for the IDPs. During the onion season, men are able to earn LKR 200 per day and women LKR 150, but the season only lasts for three months. During times of under- and unemployment, the World Food Programme provides 5kg of rice per month per person, as well as 1.5kg of dahl, plus salt, sugar, and coconut. The government also provides rations in the form of food stamps, but only to the families that arrived from the Vanni. These are worth LKR 608 per month to an average-sized family, but rise to a ceiling of LKR 1,260 for larger families. The Grama Sewako Officer, a type of Divisional Secretary, is responsible for the administration of the camp.

The relationship between the SLA army and locals has been strained from the beginning. The ordeal for the IDPs started in 1985, two years after the start of hostilities. The LTTE and the army were constantly engaged in the Kuchali area. In 1987, the IKPF arrived with a firm commitment to protect civilians, and the IDPs were resettled. However, over time, the IKPF behaviour deteriorated, extending to the use of torture methods developed in Kashmir. After the departure of the IPKF, the army continued to round up civilians for interrogation over the whereabouts of LTTE cadres and probably used similar methods of torture. The camp has been in existence since 1990 when, on 15 June, a particularly ferocious exchange between the army and the LTTE forced the villagers to leave. The army, assuming that the Tamils were sympathetic to the LTTE, burnt down houses. Later, the army took away 37, then 17 men, whilst the villagers were at worship. There is no evidence that the missing men are still alive. In 1996, two CID officers patrolling on bicycles were shot and killed by the LTTE. Seven IDPs were arrested by the army as a result, again taken from a place of worship and badly tortured. One victim is now no longer capable of manual work, having been severely beaten whilst in detention. In 2001, the navy, which is now responsible for patrolling the area to the north of Trincomalee, shot and killed six people from the camp and dumped their bodies. Their suspicions were aroused because the victims were carrying fishing nets.

The navy is more feared than the army, because its personnel are more heavy-handed and violent. In a recent incident, two inebriated navy personnel came to the camp looking for two particular young women. The IDPs managed to hide the women in question, but the men beat up the old woman who shared their hut, out of frustration. The woman never recovered from the assault and died three months later. The navy operates tight checkpoints and it controls what can and cannot be moved around or taken into the camps. Transporting anything more than 5kg of rice is not allowed, on the assumption that it may be destined for the LTTE, and ordinary torch batteries are not allowed in the camp (for fear that they may be used in the manufacture of landmines).

There has been no relaxation in the navy patrols since the CFA. This has made the occupants of the camp cynical towards the peace process. The IDPs do not feel safe in the camps and feel that the security forces will target the camp at will when they need to round up suspects. However, the alternative is much worse, as the men face enforced recruitment by the LTTE if they return to their village before the peace process has been consolidated.

The camp itself is efficiently run, well organized, and clean. The communal wells are well respected and hygienic—two for drinking water and one for laundry. Zoa, a development NGO, has built a nursery school in the camp that is well attended and well run. However, the very young children seem significantly traumatized by the security forces and will certainly require specialized care in the future, if it becomes available. In addition to the nursery, children are educated outside the camp, at a cost of LKR 60 per child, per annum. In most cases, however, the parents are too poor to keep their children at school beyond the age of 15.

There is tension between the IDPs and the local people, who accuse the camp members of polluting the surrounding area. The women in the camp object to the locals selling illicit arrack (locally-produced liquor distilled from cashew or coconut) inside the camp, although the camp does not have a major problem with alcohol. Paradoxically, because this should logically have been high on the agenda of concerns, nobody has bothered to repair the latrines that were destroyed by a cyclone. The camp suffers from outbreaks of diarrhoea during the rainy season and there is no proper proactive control over mosquitoes.

The camp is sufficiently functional to allow the IDPs the space to work out for themselves the point at which they will return to their homes. They know they will need and expect to receive support for land clearance and reconstruction. There is no great fear of landmines, though perhaps there should be. Most of the IDPs want security, not least from the LTTE and the security forces. The IDPs in Nalaveli camp appear to be more motivated and positive than their counterparts in the Jaffna district. Their access to entitlements certainly seems better and less difficult. Here too, however, there is extreme weariness with the war, juxtaposed with great fear of both the security forces—especially the navy—and the LTTE.

The estimated 11,000 IDPs housed in welfare centres across the Trincomalee district are not the only people affected by the duration of the conflict. A selected survey undertaken by the Trincomalee District Planning Secretariat, albeit undated, identified 1,970 widows in the district and 2,071 orphans (Trincomalee District Planning Secretariat/UNICEF, n.d.).

Health statistics from the district indicate the extent to which the war has made an impact upon the ability to deliver effective and preventative medical treatment. In Trincomalee, the infant mortality rate (the number of deaths per 1,000 population) almost doubled between 1999 and 2000, up from 8.45 to 15.83. In the rural areas, only just over half of all households have access to safe water. The number of infants (12–25 months) immunized decreased from 6,285 in 1999 to 4,934 in 2000. Malnourishment amongst pre-school infants (2–5 years) rose from 23.63 per cent in 1999 to 25.37 per cent in 2000 (Planning Unit, Ministry of Health, n.d., Table 3.2). There are currently 195 unfilled health posts across the district (PDHS Office, North East Province, n.d.). Across the North East Province there should be a cadre of 9,494 people working for the Ministry of Health, from surgeons to cooks. Currently, only 6,361 people are employed there, creating a shortfall, across the board, of 3,133 employees (PDHS Office, North East Province, n.d.).

Batticaloa

The town and surrounding district of Batticaloa have suffered from the war, but in different ways. Although the infrastructure and housing stock are in appalling condition, the impact upon the community has been less comprehensive than in the Jaffna peninsula and the psychological impact of the conflict seems to be less. Conversely, there is greater scope for communal tension, as Batticaloa and the surrounding region is a major trading juncture and it is this region that many nouveau riche Muslims have flourishing trading empires (see Table 4). Muslim–Tamil riots have already taken place in Muttur, a town equidistant from Trincomalee and Batticaloa (BBC World Service, 2002).

Table 4. Batticaloa population by religion, 2000

| Hindu | Christian | Muslim | Sinhalese (Buddhist) | Other | Total |
|---------|-----------|---------|----------------------|-------|---------|
| 353,399 | 30,713 | 130,864 | 571 | 160 | 515,707 |

Source: District Planning Secretariat/District Statistical Office (2000, p. 14)

In Vellicunda welfare centre, a few kilometres north of Batticaloa, 157 Sinhalese and Tamil families have escaped the excesses of both the SLA and the LTTE. Kidnapping and disappearances were both common prior to their move to the camp. Overall, the occupants of the centre are poor, but far better off than their counterparts in the Jaffna peninsula—there was little visible sign of malnutrition.

The government is helping the centre, but only a little. Those who have worked abroad receive less support than those who have not. Allowances from the state amount to LKR 600 per month for two people, which means that families must find additional work to survive. Moreover, the government allowances arrive irregularly and there are sometimes real food shortages. There are also allegations of corruption amongst those responsible for disbursing the allowances. Though aware that the war is coming to a close, none expressed a wish to return to their homes and villages, at least not until there has been peace for at least two years. However, the desire to return is a sentiment shared mainly by the older IDPs, not the younger occupants, amongst whom there seemed less affinity to ancestral links. Security officials estimate that it will take at least six months before the welfare centre occupants begin to consider leaving. Instead the IDPs would be happy for the government to give them land around the camp, which is currently privately owned—15–20 perches (160 perches = 1 acre) to grow vegetables. Apparently, this has happened in other camps in the district.

The camp offers security. There are few problems amongst the families and there is no need to guard the perimeter. Burglaries seldom occur because there is so little to steal. There are no real problems with the army or the LTTE. There are no weapons in the camp. The army used to harass the occupants on their way to and from work, but this has stopped, following the election, with the onset of the CFA, which is a marked difference from the situation in Trincomalee.

Health fears are also few and far between. Snakes are a particular problem, as is dengue fever, and the camp has been built close to a contaminated refuse site, which increases the threat of disease. There are only six wells for the entire camp, built by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). There is work in the local rice mills and the pay is equal to that received by the local people. However, the work is seasonal.⁴⁸

Beyond the camp, the security situation in and around Batticaloa has improved markedly since the CFA, but concerns for the future remain. Before the CFA, the police exerted the power vested in them by the *Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency Regulation*. This gave them the power to stop, search, and if necessary detain, and has been a major concern for human rights organizations. Since the CFA, the police have come under orders to stop and search less and allow movement from 'cleared' to 'uncleared' areas. This, in turn, has led to a marked reduction in attacks from landmines (especially Claymores) and hand grenades.

Much of the employment in the area is agricultural. People are now afraid that the LTTE will turn to harassment and extortion, which will be exacerbated by high levels of youth and graduate unemployment. Opportunistic crime is high and rising, because the CFA has led to a decrease in night patrols. Violent crime, especially in relation to family disputes, is high, as is domestic violence and alcohol abuse.⁴⁹

Weapons available in the region for criminal purposes are not particularly sophisticated—usually knives or swords. The firearms are usually shotguns or pistols. However, over the course of 2002, since the cease-fire, more sophisticated weapons are becoming available. Independent illegal arms traffickers are beginning to establish operations in the area. The PLOTE and EPLRF are beginning to build up their supplies from traffickers that are established elsewhere on the island. A Type-56 assault rifle will retail for anything between USD 500 and USD 1,000. Webley and Scott pistols and the Chinese Browning are also available and there is a high demand for concealable weapons, which ordinary criminals cannot afford but political organizations can. There appears to be no shortage of ammunition and soldiers and deserters are bringing weapons into the Batticaloa area. The further criminalization of the LTTE will not be countered by the police, who possess too few resources and, moreover, the new recruits are corruptible. The need to mount joint operations with the army will remain because of police weakness and resource constraints.⁵⁰

It is possible that rival Tamil forces will seek revenge on the LTTE. In 1978, during the process of LTTE 'consolidation', the LTTE killed 1,000 rival members of different Tamil groups in and around Batticaloa. When the IPKF presided over the development of a combined TNA that excluded the LTTE, the subsequent bloodshed created an estimated 5,000 widows.⁵¹

The LTTE is still a potent force around Batticaloa. Some 30–40 per cent of the territory is 'cleared' but the rest, 60–70 per cent, is 'uncleared' and in the hands of the LTTE. However, about 80 per cent of the population lives in the 'cleared' areas where freedom of movement is much better, security much higher, and prices and taxation lower. Transport from 'uncleared' to 'cleared' areas is highly restricted, which means that when people reach the 'cleared' areas they tend to stay. The army has established a limited number of access points for ID checks that are only open between 7.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. One consequence is that the government does not run hospitals in the 'uncleared' areas. MSF, especially, and the ICRC take the main responsibility for health care, but the government does provide visiting doctors, though how regularly and how often is not clear. Paddy cultivation in the 'uncleared' areas has been badly affected, with yields reduced by half, though slow improvements are now reported.⁵²

Officials from the Batticaloa area estimate that it will take at least 25 years to recover lost development. Whilst there is not the type of hunger and starvation that afflicts the Vanni, because there are no economic sanctions or embargoes, nevertheless, literacy rates are down to between 75 and 80 per cent from the national average of 92 per cent, and unemployment is twice the national level, currently standing at 15 per cent. Much more of a challenge will be the rehabilitation, reintegration, and reconstruction needs of both 'cleared' and 'uncleared' areas.⁵³

The Vanni

If Jaffna represents the political, intellectual, and cultural heartland of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka, the Vanni has become the military nerve centre for the LTTE. As a direct result, it has suffered disproportionately, and the Vanni hinterland has become plagued by real poverty and suffering.

Past research on the Ulukkulama Welfare Camp, located in the Vavuniya South Divisional Secretariat, reports that there are 30 displaced families in the camp. They arrived from a nearby village of Pawakkulama, and were settled by the Sri Lankan government in 1956, a process from which the villagers received good agricultural land that provided food supplies throughout the year, supplemented by fishing.

In 1985, two years after the start of the civil war, the LTTE ordered the villagers to leave. Of the 55 families, 20 went to live with relatives, and the rest moved to the safety and sanctuary of a nearby Buddhist temple. In 1987, they were rehoused in a school, following which the security forces attempted to enforce resettlement in 1998. Continuous LTTE attacks on the village forced the families to vacate the village on a permanent basis and set up their welfare camp before moving to their current welfare centre in 2000. Overall, the families were displaced five times and attempted unsuccessfully to resettle themselves on two occasions. In each case, displacement occurred following armed attack and the onset of extreme violence.

Due to displacement, the families lost their land, which amounted to three acres of paddy and 1.5 acres of highland each. The community now relies upon casual labour (50 per cent), government assistance (25 per cent), land rental (ten per cent), and government employment (eight per cent). Employment is usually seasonal and food assistance from the government amounts to LKR 1,200 for a family of five or more, less for smaller families. Whereas before there was a level of self-sufficiency, with a savings level of about four per cent, the contemporary situation is one of extreme dependence. Also, expenditure patterns have changed dramatically. Expenditure on food has doubled, which has crowded out spending on housing, clothes, travel, and festivals.

The cost of education for the community has increased by two per cent, but it is a burden endured because there is such a high regard for learning. However, the children have difficulty finding access to higher education. The children are stigmatized when they attend school and are referred to pejoratively as 'camp dwellers'. In part because of dietary needs, health levels have suffered. As a result, more money (10–12 per cent) is now spent on health (Banerjee and Muggah, 2002).

V. The social and humanitarian cost and impact of illegal SALW beyond the theatre of conflict

The recent cease-fire in the war between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE has brought to an end, albeit perhaps in fits and starts, a bitter conflict that lasted for nearly two decades with only occasional respite. The impact upon the Jaffna peninsula, especially, and the north-east coastal region has been severe and without interval. Contested areas and zones of conflict have lost two decades of economic development at least. Jaffna has been virtually razed to the ground, especially the Muslim quarter, where the LTTE undertook its version of ethnic cleansing by expelling 25,000 Muslims. The extended duration of the conflict, made possible in significant part by the availability of illegal SALW on the international black market, has forced government to spend large sums of money on the defence and security sector. It is now well understood that high defence budgets 'crowd out' other forms of public expenditure, several of which are fundamental to a country's development.⁵⁴

Defence expenditure in Sri Lanka has increased dramatically over the past decade, due entirely to the conflict in the north-east, which implies a significant increase in operational and procurement costs. Rising defence expenditure has occurred against a recent backdrop of economic weakness and downturn in some quarters. The fiscal deficit, which the government had hoped to reduce to 6.5 per cent of GDP, now stands at nearly ten per cent. Inflation has moved into double figures and as treasury borrowing has increased, interest rates have risen sharply. Exports are performing badly (and are likely to get worse, especially when Sri Lanka in 2005 loses the quotas it currently enjoys under the World Trade Organization Multifibre Agreement), foreign exchange reserves have reduced by half since the beginning of 2001, and the Sri Lankan rupee has been devalued by 6.5 per cent. The opportunity costs that have emerged due to the war are considerable.

Table 5a. Military expenditure figures for Sri Lanka (LKR billions)

| 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|
| 10.3 | 12.9 | 15.4 | 19.4 | 35.2 | 38.1 | 37.1 | 42.5 | 40.1 | [62.0] |

Table 5b. Military expenditure figures for Sri Lanka (USD millions)

| 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 322 | 361 | 387 | 450 | 756 | 707 | 628 | 658 | 593 | [870] |

Table 5c. Military expenditure figures for Sri Lanka (% of GDP)

| 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 2.8 | 3 | 3.1 | 3.4 | 5.3 | 5 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 3.6 | 4.5 |

Source: <<http://www.sipri.se>>

Defence spending has increased significantly over the past decade. The most recent rise is due to increased procurement, operational commitments, and inflation. Annual rises in defence expenditure and associated statistics are set out in Tables 5a–d. These include Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) figures, which indicate trends rather than actual commitments, and data made available by the Sri Lankan government.

| Programme | 1998 actual | 1999 actual | 2000 estimate | 2000 revised estimate | 2001 estimate |
|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Recurrent expenditure | 464,440,347 | 459,423,436 | 427,967,014 | 590,370,799 | 542,060,544 |
| Capital expenditure | 122,083,656 | 98,212,381 | 113,038,475 | 240,579,787 | 111,973,947 |
| Total expenditure | 586,524,003 | 557,635,817 | 541,005,489 | 830,950,586 | 654,034,491 |

Source: Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence (2001)

Note: LKR 1.00 = USD 0.010317; figures in square brackets are estimates

It is impossible to calibrate directly the humanitarian and development impact of high defence spending. Above all, it is not necessarily the case that lower defence spending would release resources that would be used to ameliorate poverty and underdevelopment and pay the inherent humanitarian costs of the civil war. However, the adverse impact of high defence spending will have included employment opportunity costs in both the public and the private sector. Sri Lanka currently has a large number of its population employed overseas, not all by choice. Conditions for migrant workers, especially in the Gulf states, are often very poor and exploitative. Also, in the north, Tamils have extreme difficulty returning to their homes and villages once they have left. Those who leave the IDP camps for employment abroad risk losing touch completely with relatives; the authorities in Colombo often take up to two weeks to process the appropriate papers before permission is forthcoming to visit the north.⁵⁵ Similar forms of antagonism can be seen at key check-points along the land routes to and from the north. When communities fracture and disperse, the social impact can be high. This has certainly been the case in Sri Lanka and, has become quantitatively more significant the longer the war has lasted.

The National Peace Council, a prominent local NGO, has recently produced a report on the economic cost of war in Sri Lanka. The report estimates that direct expenditure on the war by the LTTE and the government amounts to USD 2.4 billion over the course of the conflict, from 1983 to 1998. A further USD 400 million was spent on the maintenance of public order and safety over the period 1983–98. The war expenditure for equipment, training, and salaries of the LTTE over the same period amounts to around USD 420.6 million at 1998 prices (National Peace Council, 2001). In addition, the Sri Lankan government has at times deliberately restricted and withheld resources from the northern and eastern public sectors, because they are primarily Tamil. This has been offset by LTTE efforts to develop a parallel infrastructure, but all too often it is the collection of taxes rather than the delivery of public goods that becomes the sole priority.

The human cost of the war to both sides has been considerable. These costs can be both direct and indirect: fatal and non-fatal injuries to soldiers and combatants on the one hand, and, indirectly on the other, forced displacement, a rise in armed criminality, and the forced recruitment of children. Usually, post-battle death and casualty statistics from both sides are laced with propaganda and cannot be relied upon. No data is available for the LTTE. However, the official statistics reveal that the armed forces have sustained over 15,000 casualties and that the cost of the conflict rose precipitously in 2000, following the LTTE strategic change of direction (see Table 6).

Table 6. Sri Lanka armed forces battlefield casualties, 1987–June 2002

| Year | Officers | | Sub-total | Other | | Sub-total |
|---|------------|---------------|------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Permanent | Non-permanent | | Permanent | Non-permanent | |
| 1987 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1988 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1989 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1990 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 10 | 8 | 18 |
| 1991 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 59 | 106 | 165 |
| 1992 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 36 | 152 | 188 |
| 1993 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 38 | 159 | 197 |
| 1994 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 65 | 254 | 319 |
| 1995 | 7 | 15 | 22 | 192 | 260 | 452 |
| 1996 | 2 | 25 | 27 | 253 | 396 | 649 |
| 1997 | 21 | 37 | 58 | 421 | 653 | 1,074 |
| 1998 | 8 | 42 | 50 | 363 | 919 | 1,282 |
| 1999 | 27 | 20 | 47 | 903 | 862 | 1,765 |
| 2000 | 38 | 50 | 88 | 920 | 1,033 | 1,953 |
| 2001 | 42 | 171 | 213 | 861 | 2,681 | 3,542 |
| 2002 | 25 | 170 | 195 | 364 | 2,480 | 2,844 |
| Total | 179 | 553 | 732 | 4,486 | 9,963 | 14,449 |
| Grand total (all ranks) = 15,181 | | | | | | |

Source: Sri Lankan Army headquarters, Colombo, June 2002

Recent data collated from the Sri Lankan press by the South Asia Intelligence Review give some indication of the way in which the civil war has affected the LTTE, the security forces, and the civilian population. These statistics (see Table 7 and Figures 1–3) need, however, to be appraised with care. These elements of the Sri Lankan media are notoriously subject to, at worst, government control and pressure and, at best, tend to be self-censoring. The majority of newspaper reports on the conflict will reflect the bias of government reporting on the conflict—both sides are widely thought to deflate and inflate casualty statistics to suit their own political ends.

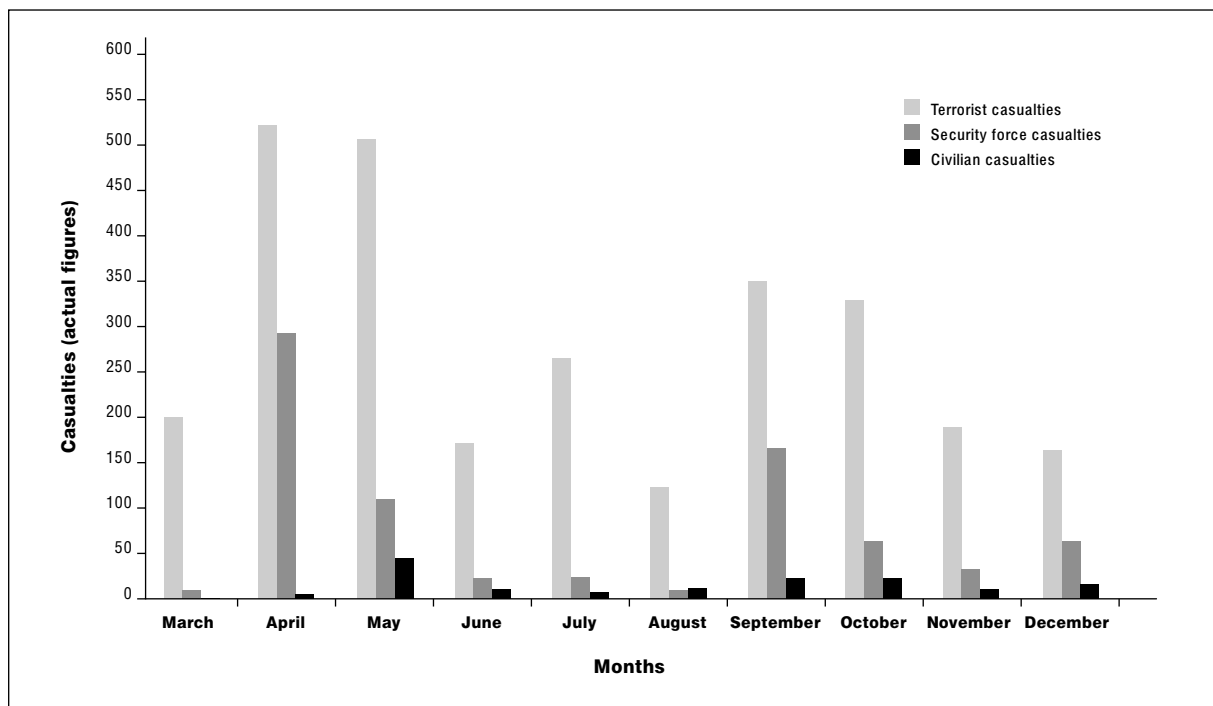
**Table 7. Casualties of civil war violence in Sri Lanka, March 2000–July 2002
(also see Figures 1, 2, and 3, below)**

| | Terrorist | Security force | Civilians | Total |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| 2000 | | | | |
| March | 202 | 7 | 0 | 209 |
| April | 527 | 292 | 4 | 823 |
| May | 507 | 111 | 44 | 662 |
| June | 178 | 21 | 10 | 209 |
| July | 265 | 21 | 8 | 294 |
| August | 128 | 7 | 12 | 147 |
| September | 349 | 163 | 22 | 534 |
| October | 336 | 65 | 24 | 425 |
| November | 190 | 30 | 18 | 238 |
| December | 163 | 67 | 20 | 250 |
| Sub-total | 2,845 | 784 | 162 | 3,791 |
| 2001 | | | | |
| January | 107 | 68 | 1 | 176 |
| February | 114 | 0 | 1 | 115 |
| March | 107 | 7 | 6 | 120 |
| April | 269 | 100 | 2 | 371 |
| May | 64 | 32 | 6 | 102 |
| June | 125 | 24 | 9 | 158 |
| July | 92 | 32 | 6 | 130 |
| August | 95 | 35 | 6 | 136 |
| September | 106 | 32 | 9 | 147 |
| October | 120 | 34 | 15 | 169 |
| November | 76 | 37 | 19 | 132 |
| December | 46 | 11 | 9 | 66 |
| Sub-total | 1,321 | 412 | 89 | 1,822 |
| 2002 | | | | |
| January | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| February | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| March | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| April | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| May | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| June | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| July | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Sub-total | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Total | 4,166 | 1,197 | 254 | 5,617 |

Source: South Asia Intelligence Review, Weekly Assessments and Briefings (2002)

The civilian costs have also been high. Details of civilians killed in action by the armed forces are not available. However, the armed forces estimate that 2,551 civilians have been killed by the LTTE and 718 have been wounded during the course of 131 incidents where civilians have been targeted between November 1984 and October 2001. Though impossible to verify, it is to be assumed that most of these deaths were caused through the use of SALW, given the nature of the war. Moreover, the observation that the ratio of killed to wounded is exceptionally high in many cases suggests significant violations of international humanitarian law. The fact that fewer civilians were killed or wounded during the second decade of conflict may in part be because the LTTE was careful to avoid targeting civilians. It may also have been due to the 'uncleared' areas becoming significantly depopulated, as many joined the IDP camps to avoid the violence (see Annex 2).

Figure 1. Casualties of civil war violence in Sri Lanka, March–December 2000



Source: South Asia Intelligence Review, Weekly Assessments and Briefings (2002)

Figure 2. Casualties of civil war violence in Sri Lanka, January–December 2001

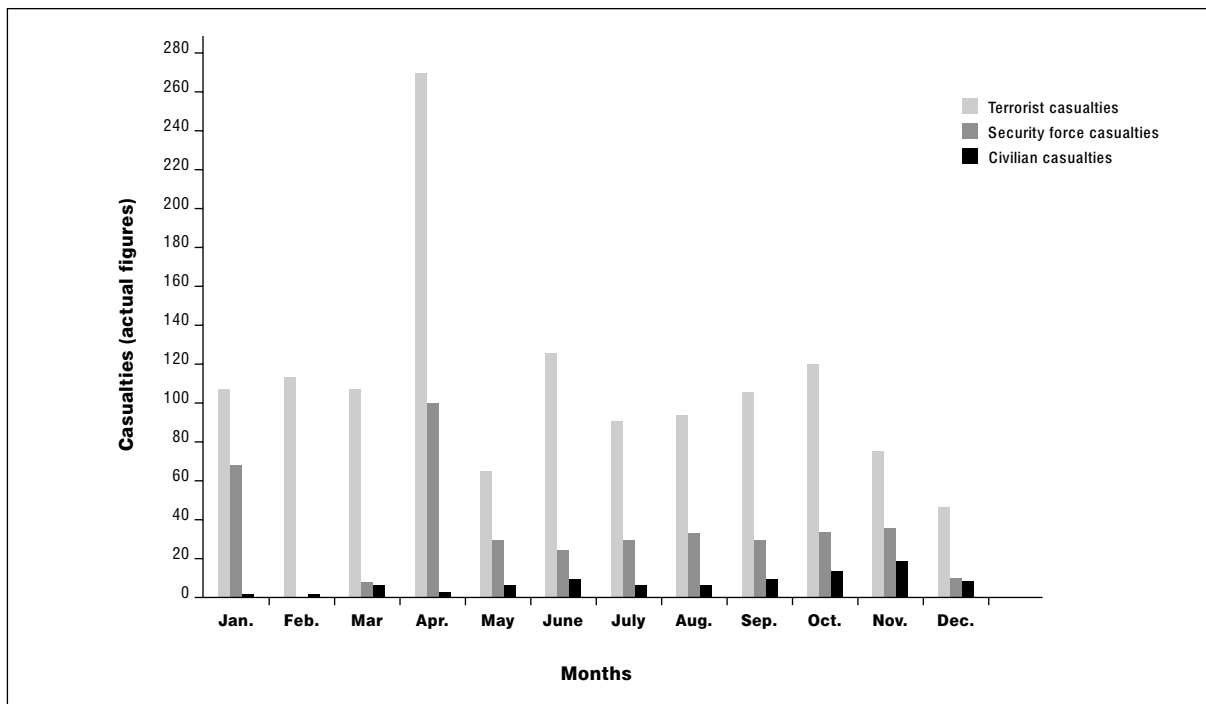
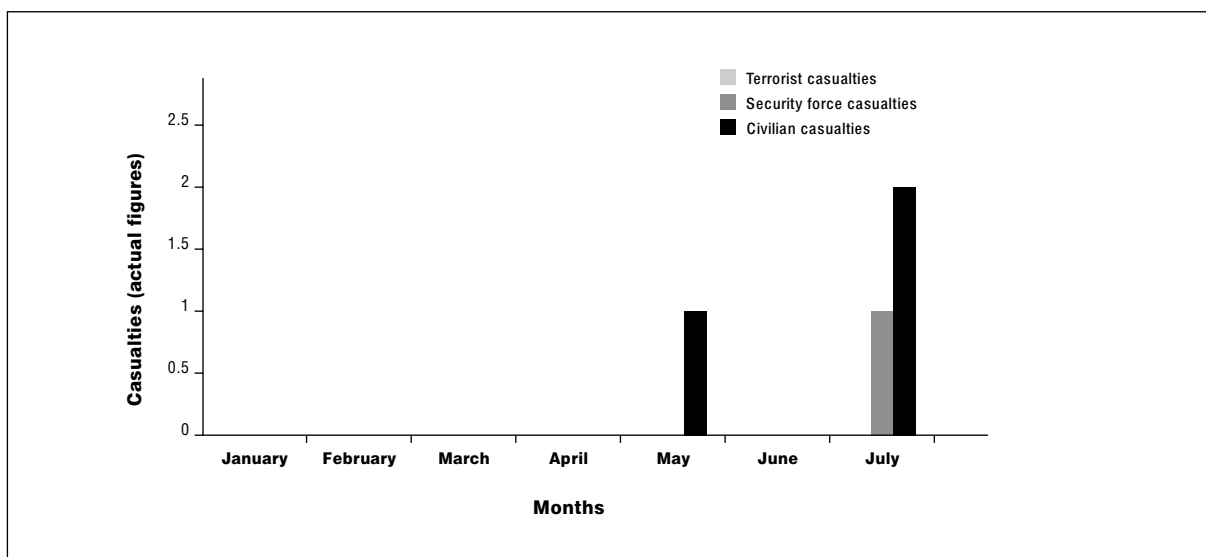


Figure 3. Casualties of civil war violence in CFA Sri Lanka, January–July 2002



Conclusion

The war between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE has affected the entire country in many significant ways. Society as a whole appears to have been incrementally brutalized and, as a result, armed violence has increased across the country and at a number of levels, at the domestic level especially. Violent crime is on the increase and, assuming the peace process holds, the nation must come to terms with war crimes and human rights abuses on both sides over two decades.

Conversely, there are large parts of the country where, superficially, the war has impinged little if at all on the lives of local people. The south-west of the country has remained a tourist haven largely unaffected by the war, except for the 2001 attack on Bandaranaike Airport, the country's only international airport of entry.

The evidence to suggest a link between the availability of illegal SALW, particularly from Southeast Asia, the extended duration of the war, and the level of social and humanitarian costs is clearly compelling. The existence of an illegal international market for SALW has allowed the LTTE leadership to engage the government at a time and place of their choosing. The availability of external finance, raised, banked, and disbursed outside of the country has also helped. In addition, when weapons or ammunition supplies are low, the LTTE has tended to sue for peace, only to reopen hostilities when the stocks have been replenished.

Page 40

However, the case for arguing that the SALW procured by the government for the security forces is more difficult to link to humanitarian impacts. Certainly, the security forces have been guilty of human rights abuses and their behaviour towards IDPs and suspected LTTE sympathizers has been questionable. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the conflict was exacerbated by the quantity of SALW purchased by the government or that the conflict would have been any less violent had levels of procurement been less.

The motivation for the current CFA and peace process probably stems from a number of factors, already discussed. The influence of weapons availability may also be identified as a salient factor when the historians of the conflict undertake their research. The post-9/11 atmosphere coupled with the independently-generated global movement to ban, control, and limit flows of SALW may also have had some influence on the strategic thinking of the LTTE. It is also clear that of late the international donor community provided the government with an unusual degree of freedom to prosecute the war, in order to bring it to a definitive conclusion. High levels of military expenditure were accepted, albeit reluctantly. High levels of venality in the procurement process were seen as issues for the future. Corruption amongst the armed forces in and around the theatre of conflict was overlooked. Human rights abuses were largely tolerated, albeit with extreme reluctance.

Basically, the international community afforded the Sri Lankan government the political space to conclude the civil war. Militarily, however, this proved extremely difficult. A strategic shift by the LTTE from a largely guerrilla force to a traditional, conventional force was costly for both sides. However, had the cost of the strategic shift become unsustainable, the LTTE would merely revert back to guerrilla tactics. On this basis, the LTTE could continue to confront the government on the most advantageous terms, provided that access to weapons, ammunition, money, fuel, and communications equipment continued. Had this access been denied from the outset or curtailed thereafter, the conflict

would have taken a different course and, perhaps, the social and humanitarian impact would have been less. However, this overlooks the political and ideological basis of the conflict, which is fundamentally rooted in Sinhalese nationalism.

The onset of peace, if and when the process goes back on track, will clearly bring with it a number of additional problems and challenges, which the state and the international donor community must recognize. The reconstruction needs of the north-east are enormous and it is highly likely, if not inevitable, that the peace process will be accompanied by a redistribution of development and humanitarian aid from the south to the north. This, in turn, will cause resentment in the south, where there is a sentiment, most prominent in the JVP, which expected the government to achieve a military solution against the LTTE, similar to the one imposed against itself.

Sri Lanka faces numerous challenges to make the peace process work and realize the enormous development potential that lies beneath the troubled political surface, which is exacerbated mainly by poor governance. The country as a whole does not yet appreciate that a major challenge lies in keeping to a minimum the illegal availability of SALW and collecting, decommissioning, and destroying those in circulation. Government, at this juncture—including the security forces—would seem to lack the motivation to achieve these aims. Perhaps, therefore, civil society is now required to assume a role of prominent leadership and public education?

To this end, the government has recently agreed a proposal from the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs to establish a National Commission on illegal SALW. The precise role of the Commission, especially in relation to areas such as stockpile control and decommissioning, has not yet been established. However, the creation of the Commission is far-sighted and may help to prevent a future SALW crisis (Smith, 2003).

Annexes

Annex 1. Shortages of medical staff in Jaffna Teaching Hospital

| Medical | Cadre | Strength | Shortage |
|-------------------------|-------|----------|----------|
| Specialists | 32 | 6 | 26 |
| Medical officers | 87 | 63 | 24 |
| Intern medical officers | 26 | 17 | 9 |
| Nursing | | | |
| Matron | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| Sisters | 22 | 2 | 20 |
| Nurses | 382 | 244 | 138 |
| Paramedical | | | |
| Lab. technicians | 20 | 11 | 9 |
| Radiographers | 15 | 04 | 11 |
| Physiotherapists | 14 | 1 | 13 |

Source: Ambalavaner (n.d.)

Annex 2. LTTE operations against the local population, November 1984–October 2001

| | Civilians killed | Civilians wounded |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1984 | 73 | 0 |
| 1985 | 202 | 85 |
| 1986 | 125 | 5 |
| 1987 | 392 | 94 |
| 1988 | 243 | 38 |
| 1989 | 101 | 22 |
| 1990 | 634 | 147 |
| 1991 | 129 | 18 |
| 1992 | 321 | 173 |
| 1993 | n/a | n/a |
| 1994 | 17 | 3 |
| 1995 | 197 | 55 |
| 1996 | 55 | 67 |
| 1997 | 5 | 3 |
| 1998 | n/a | n/a |
| 1999 | 50 | 5 |
| 2000 | 5 | 0 |
| 2001 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 2,551 | 718 |

n/a: not available from data source

Source: Sri Lankan Army headquarters, Colombo, June 2002

Endnotes

- ¹ The break down of the peace talks is certainly a serious blow to the overall peace process. However, it is almost certainly a tactical manœuvre on the part of the LTTE rather than a strategic decision to end the peace process. Moreover, it is a tactic that will certainly be used time and again, throughout the peace process.
- ² Interview, Sri Lanka Chief of Defence Staff, Colombo, February 2002.
- ³ Confidential information made available to the author, Toronto, July 2001.
- ⁴ Here there is a striking comparison to the way in which the Khalistani separatists relied upon and flourished as a result of financial assistance from abroad, or the IRA reliance upon NORAIID.
- ⁵ Firstly, an individual researcher is much more limited than a team, especially a team that includes local researchers with the appropriate local language skills. Secondly, for a stranger and a foreigner to open up a discussion on the availability and impact of illegal weapons and expect to be received with total honesty and openness is somewhat optimistic and so this proved to be the case in the IDP camps visited. Nevertheless, the participatory research has been attempted by at least eight local researchers in South Asia and Southeast Asia to assess the impact of SALW on a range of different communities facing different threats associated with armed violence: see Banerjee and Muggah (2002) for more details.
- ⁶ The following section on Tamil Tiger arms procurement relies heavily on information taken from Davis (1996, pp. 470–2), which is by far the most authoritative account on this subject to be published so far. The information in this article has been corroborated in interviews conducted by the author in Sri Lanka over the past two years.
- ⁷ For details of some of the shipments undertaken by the LTTE over the past decade, see Gunaratna in Banerjee (2000, pp. 72–6).
- ⁸ For example, the LTTE has reportedly developed arms manufacturing capabilities near Coimbatore, in Tamil Nadu. In a government document from July 1989, there were reports that the LTTE used the services of private lathe and foundry owners in Tamil Nadu in order to manufacture and assemble RPG shells, hand grenades, 7.62mm bullet shells, and LMGs. These parts were fabricated and assembled in Coimbatore before being transported to Sri Lanka via Mahabalipuram. See <<http://www.india-today.com/jain/vol6/chap9.html>>
- ⁹ Information made available to the author, Trincomalee, January 2002.
- ¹⁰ The Stinger question emerged again in mid-November 1997, when a report in the *Asian Age* suggested that the Tamil Tigers had brought down a Mi-24 helicopter gunship using a Stinger. This is possibly true, but the article contained no information that allows one to discern whether or not the weapon was a Stinger or a SAM-7; see, Jayasinghe (1997). More recently, a feature article in the *New York Times* reported that the Tamils had acquired at least two Stingers (Bonner, 1998).
- ¹¹ I have explored this issue in more detail in Smith (1999).
- ¹² During the ceremony, a Sri Lankan naval rating attacked Rajiv Gandhi with his rifle butt during the inspection parade.
- ¹³ Information made available to the author, Colombo, May 2001.
- ¹⁴ Interview with the Chief of the Defence Staff, Colombo, February 2002.
- ¹⁵ I am grateful to Rohan Guneratna for this information.
- ¹⁶ Interview with Jehan Perera, Colombo, January 2002.
- ¹⁷ Information made available to the author, Colombo, May 2001.
- ¹⁸ The Sterling is produced under licence by Canada and India; the MP-5 by Greece, Iran, Mexico, Pakistan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States; and the Uzi is produced under licence by China and Croatia.
- ¹⁹ The M-16 is produced under licence by Canada, South Korea, Singapore, and the Philippines.
- ²⁰ The SKS is produced under licence by China, former East Germany, North Korea, and the former Yugoslavia.
- ²¹ The weapons originate in Belgium, China, and Germany. Licensed production is minimal, but the vendors of these weapons in the case of Sri Lanka are unknown.
- ²² Sources for Sri Lankan government stocks of SALW are the Jane's Information Group electronic database, Centre for Defence Studies (1997), and Ezell (1988).
- ²³ For details, see University Teachers for Human Rights (2002).
- ²⁴ These views are based upon numerous conversations in Sri Lanka during visits in May and August 2002.
- ²⁵ I am grateful to Robert Kendle, the former British Defence Attaché in Colombo, for this information.
- ²⁶ Information made available to the author from several sources, Colombo, January 2001.

- ²⁷ Interview, Colombo, April 2001.
- ²⁸ Interview, Colombo, March 2001.
- ²⁹ Interview, Colombo, March 2001.
- ³⁰ Drawn from data provided by the Sri Lankan police, Colombo, April 2001.
- ³¹ Rising crime is linked to increased drug availability and use. There are an estimated 10,000 drug users in Colombo and the need to acquire drugs is often a driving force behind violent crime. Sri Lanka is now used by Pakistan and the Golden Triangle as a conduit for drug trafficking.
- ³² Information made available to the author by police headquarters in Colombo, February, 2002.
- ³³ Data provided by Colombo CID, February 2002.
- ³⁴ Information made available to the author, Colombo, February 2002. However, subsequent information made available in April 2003 suggests that this figure could be as high as 22,000
- ³⁵ Muggah and Berman (2001, p. 96) provide a survey of the humanitarian impacts of SALW in Colombia, East Timor, and Kenya.
- ³⁶ The major international human rights organizations, especially Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have documented human rights abuses in Sri Lanka over the past two decades. Local organizations such as the Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Law and Society Trust have also been active in this field.
- ³⁷ Interviews with the author, Colombo, August 2002.
- ³⁸ Interviews with camp occupants, January 2002. It is impossible to say how correct the answers were to questions about weapons in the camps. Clearly, the occupants would think very carefully about volunteering information to a foreigner and a total stranger on such a sensitive subject. Weapons and LTTE forces would tend to be synonymous and the cost of imparting such sensitive information would be extremely high.
- ³⁹ A three-member family receives 18kg of rice, 3kg of sugar, 1kg of dahl and 400g of milk powder.
- ⁴⁰ Interviews with Skandva Camp IDPs, January 2002.
- ⁴¹ Pregnant women, for example, require a higher calorific intake.
- ⁴² This in spite of the fact that the LTTE arranges local cease-fires to allow children to take their exams.
- ⁴³ Interview, with Yves Chartier, Head of Mission, MSF, Colombo, January 2002.
- ⁴⁴ In all, the security forces have occupied 104 schools across the north-east. Information made available to the author, Trincomalee, January 2002, in an undated mimeo entitled 'School occupied by the Security Forces as at 01.10.2001'.
- ⁴⁵ Undated 'Situation analysis' made available to the author, Trincomalee, January 2002.
- ⁴⁶ Interview with Matthew Todd, UNDP, Colombo, January 2002.
- ⁴⁷ On 16 January 2002, two Muslim fishermen were abducted by the LTTE at Kandaladiuththu and released after a ransom of LKR 10,000 had been paid (information made available to the author, Trincomalee, January 2002).
- ⁴⁸ Interviews with Vellacunda Welfare Centre occupants, January 2002.
- ⁴⁹ In particular, this is due to the sale of illegal arrack—kasittu.
- ⁵⁰ Interview with Inspector Cicero, Sri Lankan Police, Batticaloa, January 2002.
- ⁵¹ Information made available to the author, Batticaloa, January 2002.
- ⁵² Fishing has been adversely affected by a ban on out-board motors—fishermen need at least 15hp motors for deep-sea fishing.
- ⁵³ Information made available to the author, Batticaloa, January 2002.
- ⁵⁴ There is an extensive academic discourse on the impact of defence spending on development; see Small Arms Survey (2003) for a thorough discussion of these debates.
- ⁵⁵ The author witnessed this at first hand at Jaffna airport, where a British citizen complained that he had taken three weeks leave which translated into a mere two nights back in his home village, due to delays. Moreover, travellers are subjected to unnecessary delays in extremely poor conditions. The check-in time at Jaffna airfield for Tamils is an unnecessary six hours.

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