

## Did Sri Lanka Secure Peace?

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Whilst the Sri Lankan government celebrates a military victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers), the prospects for permanent peace seem remote given that the underlying causes for the rebellion have not been addressed.

The Sinhalese, comprising of over 70% of the population, have been accused of oppressing and impoverishing the minority Tamils, who populate the North-Eastern parts of Sri Lanka. After independence from the British, the Sri Lankan government made Sinhalese the official language, effectively excluding the Tamils from government posts.

Numerous pogroms against the Tamils have been reported, forcing them to flee to the north. Demands by the LTTE for independence or autonomy have been met with brutal military force, causing deep resentment and spawning a guerrilla movement.

The Mahavali Scheme diverting the largest river for irrigation and power-generation were given to 80,000 Sinhalese in the east, where Tamils were some 40% of the population (they are 86% of the population in the north), was viewed as colonizing Tamil lands, sparking horrific communal riots.

Tens of thousands of innocent lives were lost in atrocities and massacres perpetrated by both sides, but the Sri Lankan government succeeded in persuading the USA to classify the LTTE as a "terrorist organization". As a result, the Tamil Tigers sources of finance and military supplies dwindled, the resistance weakened and they were defeated.

The reaction of the Tamil Tigers to their oppression have, at times, been barbaric, the causes of their immense suffering still remain. The ruthlessness and savagery of the Sri Lankan government could further radicalise the Tamils, initiating prolonged civil strife. Until and unless their justified grievances are resolved, another guerilla uprising is likely to emerge.

Yours faithfully

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