

Sri Lanka's National Security Challenges Since Independence and the Response of Its Armed Forces.

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If you want peace, then prepare for war (Latin Proverb)

The post – Independence regular Armed Forces of Ceylon were raised, initially with the Ceylon Army in 1949, Royal Ceylon Navy in 1950 and the Royal Ceylon Air Force in 1951. However the nation's politicians focused on national development with little emphasis on military spending for national security. Yet, the internal security threats had to be catered for with the employment of the Armed Forces under Emergency Regulations. The protection contracted by the Anglo- Ceylon Defence Agreement provided an assurance of national security from an external threat.

This mindset of the politicians has greatly impacted on the efficiency and effective use of the country's Armed Forces. We have catered for internal or human security requirements at the expense of National Security which is primarily focused on safeguarding the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Being a Third World developing country our political and socio- economic conditions have perforce led the Armed Forces to support the country's internal security needs. There cannot be any development in a country without adequate security but due to the nature of internal security the Armed Forces have been handicapped in performing its duties. This has led to the Armed Forces dealing with violence of its own people using defensive methods throughout its existence. The legal, monetary and infrastructure constraints have forced the Armed Forces to be defensive and reactionary. This has led to a deterioration of law and order, increased violence in the form of terrorism leading to a two decade long insurgency.

The post Independence history of Sri Lanka's Armed Forces does not record a regular and comprehensive review of its security needs and threats and the development of a coherent national security policy, to meet the aspirations of all Sri Lankans. It has led Sri Lanka to its present crisis where the LTTE has manoeuvred itself into a strong position causing the Government of Sri Lanka to negotiate peace on LTTE terms. This has far reaching consequences affecting also the region in particular and the world in general. Arresting this situation requires an immediate, thorough and proper defence review and a subsequent re-structuring and re-organisation of the Armed Forces to meet the carefully identified present and future security challenges in Sri Lanka.

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