

Soldiers and politics- special projects profile of a third world country

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There are shocking ironies and inconsistencies in the political management of soldiers in all countries, I suspect. Third World countries, being less used to high tech communication and globalization, and having fewer financial resources, are probably less skilled at recognizing and using sophisticated methods of hiding potentially embarrassing, inconsistencies. I am interested in discussing examples in Sri Lanka's political management of soldiers.

Until May 2009, for nearly three decades, there was civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam) (Tamil Press, 2010). The government is a Sinhalese Buddhist government, sworn to "foster and protect Buddhism", a responsibility used to justify war against the LTTE and genocide against the Tamil People (Tikhonov, 2010). This war was encouraged and backed by the Buddhist Community, in Sri Lanka, especially by powerful Buddhist monks (Tikhonov, 2010). The LTTE is a terrorist guerilla organization, whose goal was to protect the Hindu and Christian Tamil Homeland in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka (Tikhonov, 2010).

We think of Buddhism as a peaceful religion. In fact, Buddhist countries throughout history are demonstrably capable of extreme violence. This dichotomy between the teachings of Buddhism and a violent military Buddhist government, sworn to protect those teachings, is the basis of the first irony and inconsistency to mention. The Sri Lankan government desecrated and occupied Hindu temples, and Hindu sacred places throughout the war, and afterward celebrated their military genocide of the Tamils by building Buddhist structures in the defeated Tamil areas, using barbed wire to block access to Tamil places of worship (Thivya, 2011).

Buddhist soldiers acted under orders from Buddhist political leadership, backed by Buddhist monks, in the name of protecting Buddhism, which in Sri Lanka began as a branch of Hinduism, furthering the irony. Indian Hindu Tamil-paid taxes were used to finance this aggression against Sri Lankan Tamil Hinduism, in that the government of India gave loans and grants, enabling this aggressive violation by Buddhists against their ancestral mother religion (Thivya, 2011).

The war concluded under the Presidency of Mahinda Rajapakse. General Sarath Fonseka, longtime political partner of Rajapakse, is the General who led Rajapakse's government to victory in defeating the LTTE, massacring soldiers and more than 7000 civilians who surrendered in the final days of the last battle (The Telegraph, 2011).

This Sinhalese war-hero and political ally ran against Rajapakse in an election, after the war ended, and was defeated, 6 million votes to 4 million (Nagaraj, 2010). A month later, Rajapakse sent 100 soldiers to arrest him, under force, charged with "committing military offenses". He spent 30 months in prison (Nagaraj, 2010). Rajapakse basks in the glory of those "military offenses" and claims no war crimes were committed by SLA soldiers (The Telegraph, 2011).

At the end of the war, the military held 11,686 LTTE former adult combatants, including 1,100 female combatants, 400 of whom were then trained as Montessori teachers (Real Srilankan, 2010). It seems a strange occupation for battle-hardened soldiers. Out of 514 child soldiers, 273 are now studying at Hindu College (Tamil Press, 2010), another inconsistency. SLA soldiers have been put to work painting buildings and beautifying

Colombo (the commercial capital of Sri Lanka), forcing away beggars, evicting the poor, demolishing slums, selling vegetables from SLA trucks and shops, running two luxury resorts, serving as ambassadors and governors. The Defense Ministry has taken over Urban Development Authority and the National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organizations (overseeing social and psychosocial services), effectively blocking services (Guardian, 2011). An analysis of the key terms used in this brief paper will show that genocide and Montessori teacher, massacres and selling vegetables, ordering war crimes and arresting for them, executing civilians who surrender and serving as Ambassadors abroad, protecting Buddhism and blocking access to Hindu temples, are incompatible concepts. Such are the political ironies and inconsistencies of soldier management in Sri Lanka.

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