threatened the stability of the Hamid Karzai's Afghan government. The Pakistani Taliban's goal is not only to assist their Afghan counterparts in recapturing Kabul, but also establish a true Islamic emirate.

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See Also: Afghanistan; Art; Corruption; Oil; Pakistan; Soviet Union in Central Asia; Taliban and Al-Qaeda; Television; Terrorism; Women.

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Tamil Insurgency in Sri Lanka

On May 17, 2009, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) admitted defeat in the war against the Sinhalese-dominated Sri Lanka security forces and vowed to silence their guns. On May 18, Sri Lanka security forces announced that the LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran, who led the three-decades-old violent campaign to build an ethnic nation for the Tamils, who predominantly live in the northern and eastern territories of the island of Sri Lanka, was killed by Sri Lanka's military in a firefight that signaled the effective end to one of Asia's longest-running military conflicts. The territory formerly controlled by the LTTE has been under the control of the government since the middle of 2009, and the government led by President Mahinda Rajapakshe is claiming that it is making all efforts to rebuild the war-affected northern region where a large majority of ethnic Tamils and minority Muslims live. This entry will deal with the roots of the Tamil insurgency. It would also attempt to provide a brief overview on the growth and demise of the Tamil insurgency led by the LTTE. It will finally suggest some solutions to the Tamil national question.

The Beginnings: The Colonial Period

The history of Sri Lanka's Tamil conflict or the roots of the Tamil insurgency can be identified from the colonial period. Three regional sovereign kingdoms existed in the country, when the Portuguese, the first of the Western colonialists, arrived on the shores of Ceylon in 1505. One of these was the independent Tamil Kingdom located on the northern Jaffna Peninsula of the same name. Two were Sinhalese with their capitals at Kotte and at Kandy in the central hill country. The northern Tamil Kingdom had been in existence since the early 13th century. The Portuguese defeated the Tamil Kingdom then administered by Cankili II, the last Tamil king, in battle and formally annexed the Jaffna Kingdom in 1619. After the Portuguese influence left the island, the Dutch replaced the Portuguese-occupied places until their departure. The British, who displaced the Dutch in 1831, unified the island and thus brought the Jaffna Kingdom under a single administration along with the Sinhala kingdoms. The Jaffna-centered Tamil Kingdom was neither consulted by the British nor offered an alternative power sharing with the Sinhalese.

Problems arose when the British favored the Tamils and gave some cultural concessions to the Tamil region such as building top English-language schools in the Tamil-dominated Jaffna district and forming alliances with elites of the Tamils to help in colonial administration. When independence came in 1948, the Sinhalese, the majority ethnic group, who thought that they were being marginalized and found themselves in a precarious position, as the majority group sought to gain economic power. The leaders of the Sinhalese seized power from the British administrators and adopted pro-Sinhala policies to redress the grievances of the majority-community Sinhalese.

S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike laid the first foundation for such an ethnicization of politics by introducing the Sinhala-only language policy in the 1950s. Repeatedly over the next four decades, Sinhala politicians employed the same ethnic tricks to capture a large

share of the Sinhalese votes. Then, an educational standardization policy in 1972 allowed Sinhalese students to enter science and medicine schools with lower scores than Tamil students. The constitution of 1972 conferred a special status on Buddhism in both the state and public sectors. Communal riots in 1958, 1961, 1974, 1977, and 1983 in which Tamils were killed, maimed, robbed, and rendered homeless were carefully designed by the Sinhala elites and eventually radicalized the Tamils, who considered themselves as a distinct nation and subsequently produced Tamil militants, notably the LTTE (in 1976), a secessionist Tamil guerrilla movement that set the stage for violent Tamil retaliation and efforts to secede.

The LTTE's 30-year struggle for an independent Tamil state effectively challenged the state policies over the Tamils. It also attracted reasonable global support from the Tamil diaspora as well as some quarters of the Western governments and policy makers. However, the global political developments of the post–September 11 terrorist attacks have radically contributed to the erosion of global sympathy for the LTTE. Sri Lanka's Sinhala political class succeeded in portraying the Tamil struggle as a mere terrorist campaign and advantageously employed the global war on terrorism for its own counterinsurgency activities and war against the LTTE.

The LTTE was militarily defeated in May 2009. The island of Sri Lanka has entered into a new phase, and a political commitment was made to seek a meaningful reconciliation with the Tamils and other minorities to take the island into a postconflict period. The questions therefore are: Will the demise of the LTTE lead to the erosion of the rights of the non-Sinhalese in the island of Sri Lanka? Will the collapse of violent resistance by the LTTE further strengthen the Sinhala extremists who aspire to build a Sinhalese-only Sri Lanka? Or will it further alienate the minorities of Sri Lanka?

The Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka suggests that politicization of ethnic distinctions by major political parties has weakened democracy and its institutions and thus has fueled ethnic violence and conflict. Democratic institutions in Sri Lanka need to be strengthened. Political autonomy and power sharing can help the Tamils increase their level of trust in the state and its institutions. In other words, tension among groups can be significantly reduced in Sri Lanka if the Sinhala

political class genuinely seeks political compromise with the Tamil polity and other minorities through a feasible political solution that goes beyond the current British-imposed unitary structure. If there is resistance to the offer of power sharing, the other option is partition, which can possibly offer social and political security, as well as stability to the different ethnic groups.

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See Also: Democratization; Ethnic and Communal Conflicts; Nationalism; Social Change and New Classes; Sri Lanka.

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Television

Throughout the 20th century, television viewership in west, central, and south Asia has dramatically risen as television sets and satellite dishes replaced radios as the main source of information and entertainment. The content broadcast by state television entities, while still playing a central role in many countries of these regions, has been placed under direct pressure by the ubiquitous programming of satellite television stations. While radio remains a significant media source, particularly in rural areas, rising numbers of people across these regions have access to television sets, which have become increasingly popular and affordable as economies have developed. One of the most prevalent issues throughout the development of television in postcolonial and post–Soviet Union eras has been the level of inclusion of local cultures and languages, the proportion of importation of foreign