

WARID: Sri Lanka (JVP) 1987-1990
STARDATE: 29 July 1987¹
ENDDATE: 31 December 1990²
Related cases: LTTE (1983-2001)
LTTE (2005-2009)
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Conflict overview

After an initial insurrection in 1971, the Janathā Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) re-established itself as the third-largest political party in Sri Lanka in the early 1980s (Moore 1993: 610; Venugopal 2009: 568). A mixture of different political, ideological and economic reasons exist as to why the JVP started a second, far more violent, insurgency against the government represented by the United National Front (UNP) and other established parties at the end of the 1980s. First, the JVP was banned by President Junius Richard Jayawardene in 1983 due to its supposed organization of “communal riots” against Tamil minorities (Moore 1993: 611). The party had to go underground, triggering its radicalization around leader Rohan Wijeweera. Second, similar to the first insurrection in 1971, large-scale ‘educated unemployment’ – especially concerning young Sinhalese (Moore 1993: 616) – facilitated mobilization opportunities for the Marxist-Leninist JVP. These effects were amplified by the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord in 1987 and the incoming Indian Peace Keeping Forces in northern Sri Lanka (Moore 1993: 611; Rösel 1997: 238). As a communist and nationalist party, the JVP succeeded in presenting itself as a strong voice against foreign influences and improvements for the Tamil minority. The JVP was therefore successful in becoming a catchment basin for many young Sinhalese who held both economic fears and underlying nationalist ideologies. The demands of the JVP were vague and constantly shifting: the resignation of the government, an unconditional basic income, the repatriation of the Indian Tamils, and the retreat of the Indian troops (Rösel 1997: 250). Therefore, we may envision a class-system

1 Change of dates in comparison to UCDP (2010): consistent with the case-specific literature, the start date is now modified to 29 July 1987, the day the Indian-Sri Lankan Peace Treaty was signed, which may be seen as the starting point of the violent conflict (see Rösel 1997: 229, 238, 255, 260; Moore 1993: 593, 613, 515; Pfaffenberger 1988: 139).

2 The exact determination of a concrete end date is not possible. Death squads ‘hunted’ supposed JVP-sympathizers until the end of April 1990 (Rösel 1997:286; Amnesty International 1990: 59). Consistent with UCDP, and being that there was no official termination of the war, the end date is 31 December 1990.

fight with the aim of establishing a Buddhist welfare state favoring the Sinhalese youth (Rösel 1997: 250).

From 1987 onwards, the conflict between the JVP and the government escalated into one of the most brutal civil wars in the history of Sri Lanka (Rösel 1997: 281). At the peak of JVP's power in 1988-1989, a "takeover of power by the JVP appeared a distinct possibility" (Moore 1994: 615). Government-related 'death squads' started a brutal counter-offensive and existentially weakened the JVP. In November 1989, Wijeweera and almost all of the JVP leadership were captured and killed; the war ended with "what must be termed an unconditional military victory by the government" in 1990 [WARENDUC=4].³ This interpretation is shared by all political observers [WARENDOS=4].

During the 41 months of war [WARDUR=41], 2,000 people were killed according to the UCDP [FATALUC=2000].⁴ This number is highly contested by the estimates from other sources – the range of these estimates lies between 10,000 and more than 60,000 [FATALOS=50000].⁵ In 1987, 16.1 million people lived in Sri Lanka [PREWARPO=16100000].⁶ As such, the intensity of the war can be calculated at 0.01% of the pre-war population according to UCDP estimates [INTENSUC=0.01] or at 0.31% according to other sources [INTENSOS=0.31].

The military balance at the end of the war

The second JVP insurrection ended with a clear victory for the government led by President Ranasinghe Premadasa. As mentioned above, in a few months at the end of 1989, Wijeweera and the entire JVP leadership were eliminated (Rösel 1997: 286). In the following months, death squads and 'capitulation committees' exercised many retaliatory killings against JVP-sympathizers, thereby destroying the whole organizational structure of the JVP [VICTORY=-1].⁷

Until mid-1988, the JVP controlled several districts in the south (Moore 1994: 629; Rösel 1997: 252). Despite its high relative military weakness, the JVP was able to take over an important air force base and several high-security prisons (Rösel 1997: 267, 262). The JVP was ultimately forced to concede all the power and control it gained after its absolute defeat in

3 http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdata/gpcountry.php?id=144®ionSelect=6-Central_and_Southern_Asia# (9 Jul 2014).

4 http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdata/gpcountry.php?id=144®ionSelect=6-Central_and_Southern_Asia# (3 Jun 2014).

5 There are various estimates about the concrete number of fatalities. In this case, the mean of the latest estimate of 40,000-60,000 is considered to be the most realistic (Weiberg-Salzman 2010: 79, see Senaratne 1997: 15). Other sources: 10,000-30,000 (Rösel 1997: 286); 40,000 (Moore 1993: 593).

6 <http://api.worldbank.org/v2/en/indicator/sp.pop.totl?downloadformat=excel> (20 June 2014).

7 Rösel 1997: 286; see Moore 1994: 639.

1990 [**REBTERR= -1**]⁸; the government won back control over the occupied regions [**MORETERR= -1**]. The relative fighting capacity of the rebel side was ‘low’ according to Cunningham et al. (2009) [**REBFIGHT= -1**]. This rating is consistent with other sources on their military capacity. The JVP was, however, able to temporarily create an atmosphere of predominance using tactics of guerilla warfare, threats and extortion, operating very successfully within its range of possibilities (Rösel 1997: 625).

After the elimination of Wijeweera and other prominent JVP activists in November 1989 [**LEADER= -1**]⁹, the JVP lost its leadership and organizational structure and was unable to continue fighting [**CONFIGHT= -1**].

In sum, a huge military imbalance has to be stated at the end of the war to the benefit of the government and President Premadasa of the UNP [**WARBAL= -1**].

The military balance in the post-war period

The unambiguous military victory by the government influenced the military balance in the post-war period. The government was the only of the former warring parties that had control of the state’s military and police forces [**STATEFOR 1991-2012= -1**] and separate armed forces [**SEPFORCE 1991-2012= -1**].¹⁰ The JVP did not have any reported military forces, troops or equipment after 1990 [**TROOPS 1991-2012=n.r.; ARMS 1991-2012= n.r.**].¹¹ Following the JVP’s participation in government in 2004, there were no indications that this political integration came with any substantial military benefits for the JVP.¹²

Furthermore, due to the absolute absence of JVP activities – especially from 1991 to 1993 (Venugopal 2009: 568) –, the government controlled all important territory after the war [**TERRCON 1991-2012= -1, TERRWIN 1991-2012= -1**]. The government was therefore strategically less vulnerable in its territory [**VULNERAB 1991-2012= -1**]. All of these military issues prove irrelevant since the (temporary non-existent) JVP did not attempt to restart fighting and distanced itself from the armed struggle. Its integration in the 2000s was only of a political nature and the new JVP had no intention of changing the military status quo in regards to their position in the post-war era.

Indian peacekeeping forces were positioned in northern Sri Lanka and reacted to the war between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and to the war

8 Cunningham et al. 2009

9 Venugopal 2009: 570

10 IISS 1990

11 IISS 1990

12 The JVP was, for example, able to place four ministers in the cabinet in 2004 but they did not receive any positions with military influence.

between the government and the JVP.¹³ Though the anti-imperialistic JVP used this fact to mobilize and recruit sympathizers, neither peacekeeping troops [PEACEKEEP 1991-2012=n.r.] nor any member of the UN Security Council intervened in the conflict between the JVP and the government [P5ALLY 1991-2012=n.r.].

Not surprisingly, the value for POSTBAL shows an absolute military imbalance in the post-war period in favor of the government [POSTBAL 1991-2012= -1]. Thus, the combined values of WARBAL and POSTBAL represent a clear military victory for the government and reflect the fact that the JVP distanced itself from the armed struggle (Venugopal 2009: 571) in the post-war period [BALANCE 1991-2012= -1].

Economy

World Bank data indicates nearly constant growth of both the Sri Lankan population and the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita for each year of our investigation. One has to keep in mind that the two other wars in Sri Lanka (LTTE 1983-2001 & LTTE 2005-2009) influenced the GDP per capita in this long time period as well.

Table 1: GDP per capita in Sri Lanka in current USD

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population¹⁴</i>	<i>GDP per capita¹⁵</i>
1991	17,267,000	521
1992	17,426,000	557
1993	17,646,000	586
1994	17,891,000	655
1995	18,136,000	718
1996	18,336,000	758
1997	18,568,000	813
1998	18,784,000	841
1999	19,056,000	822
2000	19,102,000	855
2001	18,797,000	838
2002	18,921,000	904
2003	19,173,000	985
2004	19,435,000	1063
2005	19,644,000	1242
2006	19,858,000	1423
2007	20,039,000	1614
2008	20,217,000	2014
2009	20,450,000	2057
2010	20,653,000	2400
2011	20,869,000	2836
2012	20,328,000	2922

13 Fortna 2008

14 <http://api.worldbank.org/v2/en/indicator/sp.pop.totl?downloadformat=excel> (3 July 2014)

15 <http://api.worldbank.org/v2/en/indicator/ny.gdp.pcap.cd?downloadformat=excel> (3 July 2014)

The scale of compromise after the war

Due to the fact that the second JVP insurrection between 1987 and 1990 aimed at taking control of the government, we consider the entire island as a disputed territory.

Freedom House (2014) considers elections in the post-war era in Sri Lanka as basically free and fair. There was no special ban on the JVP after their defeat in 1990; perhaps because this did not seem necessary due to their temporary absence in the early 1990s. The UNP initially had an advantage being that they controlled the government after the war and no elections took place until 1994 [**ELECT 1991-1993= -1**]. In the 1994 parliament elections, the JVP won a seat and started to slowly re-establish itself [**ELECT 1994-2012=0**].¹⁶

Nevertheless, the UNP remained the largest party and stayed in power until 2003 [**GOVERN 1991-2003= -1**].¹⁷ After a consolidation led by Somawansa Amarasinghe, the JVP – as mentioned above – won one seat in the parliament in the 1994 election and “gradually established their presence as a mainstream force in electoral politics [...] with increasing success” (Venugopal 2009: 572) in the late 1990s. In 2004, the JVP formed the United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and won the election against the UNP.¹⁸ The JVP was able to place four members in the cabinet¹⁹ [**GOVERN 2004-2012=0**]. Due to the fact that the JVP was in a coalition with other parties that belonged to the establishment – and were former opponents, in a sense –, the re-integration of the JVP into the political system can be seen as successfully completed in 2004. Their political rehabilitation and development from “a party devoted to overthrowing the system from the outside, to a party to cleansing and preserving it from the inside” (Venugopal 2009: 598) is worth mentioning.²⁰

Case-specific literature does not give any indication that veto rights were formally declared for any one party. This seems logical due to the fact that there were no official agreements due to the JVP’s definitive defeat. From 1991 to 2003, the UNP held exclusive decision-making powers [**VETO 1991-2003= -1**]; after the JVP’s participation in the government as of 2004, one could argue that both sides shared power, though neither held a veto right [**VETO 2004-2012=n.r.; VETOSAT 1991-2012=n.r.**].

16 Venugopal 2009: 568; The JVP contested this election in 1994 under the banner of the ‘National Salvation Front’ but this was not due to a ban of the JVP but due to inter-party fights between the Somawansa faction and a London-based faction lead by Chandra Fernando, the brother-in-law of the JVP’s founder Rohana Wijeweera (Venugopal 2009: 572).

17 Election results: <http://www.slections.gov.lk/pastElection4.html> (4 July 2014)

18 Election results: <http://www.slections.gov.lk> (9 July 2014)

19 http://www.jvpsrilanka.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=119&Itemid=27 (5 July 2014)

20 This was possible even though the JVP did not especially dissociate from the armed struggle in the late 1980s: http://www.jvpsrilanka.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=119&Itemid=27 (9 July 2014)

The warring parties did not fight over external or internal borders in Sri Lanka [**EXBORDER 1991-2012=n.r.; INBORDER 1991-2012=n.r.**]. Moreover, the JVP and the government did not fight about the allocation of competences among the political levels [**COMPETEN 1991-2012=n.r.**], considering that the JVP aimed to overthrow the whole government of Sri Lanka. One implicit and vague aim that the JVP had was to redesign the Sri Lankan economic system into a Buddhist welfare state favoring the Sinhalese youth (Rösel 1997: 250). One cannot see any large changes in economic policies in this direction in the post-war era – neither before nor after the JVP began participating as a coalition partner in the government after 2004. Therefore, the side governing at the beginning of war – the UNP along with other ‘established parties’ – prevailed concerning the economic order [**ECONOMY 1991-2012= -1**]. Similarly, there were no compromises implemented in regards of the class system that the JVP had contested [**SPECPRO 1991-2012= -1**]. Due to the fact that the JVP was vague in its demands in the late 1980s and “ideology seemed irrelevant” to them (Rösel 1997: 250), we do not identify any other issues under discussion during wartime [**ISSUE 1991-2012=n.r.; ISSUE2 1991-2012=n.r.**].

Between 1991 and 2000, the JVP had to manage its political resurrection (see Venugopal 2009: 570-584) and no new central issues emerged [**NEWCON 1991-2000=n.r.**]. Between 2001 and 2005, the JVP “became the leading Sinhala nationalist political organization in Sri Lanka, and also the leading political force that opposed the peace process” (Venugopal 2009: 584). Politically, the JVP was able to benefit from their strong opposition to the peace process with the LTTE – they were able to present themselves as the only alternative to the other parties (Venugopal 2009: 581). Though other elements in the Sri Lankan left were, similar to the JVP, strongly opposed to the government’s economic agenda, they “prioritized peace over economic issues” (Venugopal 2009: 581) and decided to support the government, fearing a disruption of the fragile peace process. With their exclusive and “tireless opposition to even the most moderate versions of the Tamil nationalist agenda” (Venugopal 2009: 587), culminating in the final collapse of the peace negotiations in 2005, the JVP was ‘successful’ in its intention to destroy any possible agreements with the Tamil minority. The political situation for the Tamil minority and the LTTE had not substantially improved up until 2012 (ICG 2012: 1); as such, the JVP prevailed in its aim to prevent further improvements for the Tamils [**NEWCON 2001-2012=1; NEWCON2 1991-2012=n.r.**]. Due to the fact that there were few implemented compromises, and one cannot identify a clear ‘victor’ concerning the few existing topics, the **BENEFIT** item has to be seen as not relevant [**BENEFIT 1991-2012=n.r.; BENEFIT2 1991-2012=n.r.**].

Summing up, between 1991 and 2000 the scale of compromise is strongly in favor of the UNP since the JVP was preoccupied with the task of re-organizing itself [**COMPROM 1991-1993= -1; COMPROM 1994-2000= -0.8**]. After its political ‘rebirth’ (Venugopal 2009: 570) and the JVP’s ability to gain from the peace negotiations, the scale of compromise was less but still in favor of the UNP [**COMPROM 2001-2003= -0.50**]. Particularly since the JVP’s participation in the government, the scale of compromise was nearly balanced. Though there were no implemented compromises concerning their economic demands, the JVP was an established party in Sri Lankan politics by the end of this period of investigation and therefore had the same rights and opportunities as other political actors in Sri Lanka [**COMPROM 2004-2012= -0.2**].

Stability of peace

After the complete destruction of the JVP in 1990 followed by years of absence, the JVP re-established itself as a leftist party in Sri Lankan politics. For this reason, there were no renewed military conflicts between the JVP and the government [**SAMEWAR=0; DATESAME=n.r.; PEACMON1=264**]. The second JVP insurrection was not the last war in Sri Lanka: The first LTTE war lasted until 2001 and there was a second LTTE conflict from 2005 to 2009. However, as this second LTTE war must not be counted twice, i.e. once with regard to the LTTE dyad and once with regard to the JVP dyad, it was not relevant for this case description [**ANYWAR=0; DATEANY=n.r.; PEACMON2=264**].

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