

Those were the four main players in the diplomatic warfront who acted as the Great Wall or fire wall, moats, bulwark or whatever you call it against the audacious onslaughts of Stein, Boyle, and MIA and subtle machinations of the likes of Pillai, Bildt, Milliband or Solheim or the avalanche of international support garnered from the misinformed public with the crocodiles tears of the cry babies like Vany K.

There might have been other unsung heroes in MFA (maybe Nihal Jayasinge) here and there. I truly apologize if I have hurt their feelings by accident. But let me tell about Sri Lanka's Foreign Service and its diplomats. This is not secondhand information but firsthand information. As a soldier I serve in overseas duty locations, and pass through a lot of countries to and fro. I have met and spoken to the GOSL diplomatic staff from ambassador, minister counselor downward up to diplomatic chauffeur. I am sorry to say that Sri Lanka Foreign Service is a 'total clusterf**k'!

Where are the ambassadors like Dr. Vernon Mendis in contemporary Sri Lanka? In 1980s Sri Lanka Army organized a lecture by Dr. Mendis at the Army Headquarters (AHQ). The lecture was to commence after work, I should say at 1700hrs (5:00pm). The front rows were allocated to Brigadiers and Colonels and rest was filled with young officers who were there to 'fill the seats'. Why I say this is when there is a rigger match between services or service versus a club you see cadets in tie and shirt there (They are 'bussed' there, like politicians pay and give lunch packets to bring crowds to May Day rallies, to cheer on). For this lecture the sister services had been invited too but only for Flag Officers (naval or air commodores) and above. It was a disgrace, no officer, was there except one whose rank happened to be equivalent to a 'major' from a sister service. Can you imagine why he was there? For saving face; he was the Training Officer. Though I did not have a 'rank' nowhere near a brigadier or equivalent, I snuck into the lecture room and listened very attentively. The things I learnt in that lecture I never forget, and has helped this eighth grade soldier (for JVP, soldiers are just eighth graders!) to stand shoulder to shoulder with top notch military officers in the western world and let them appreciate what sort of IQ level Sri Lankan soldiers can bring to the table. Later Dr. Mendis was kind and humble enough to grant, on my kind request, a private information briefing for an officer who had to sit for the service promotion exam. I asked at his home about the constant instability in Afghanistan as it was under the Russian occupation then. He said emphatically that Afghanistan has never been governed by a central government and never would be as it is a tribal society. That was in 1980s, in the 20th century. When the western forces, some of them are my good friends, struggle in Afghanistan in the 21st century I remember Dr. Mendis in total gratitude. Thank you, sir, letting me know that when I was just a 24 year old soldier!

Nowadays the ambassadors in Foreign Service are old and feeble; most of them are political appointees. They are there either to seek advance medical treatment or send their children to good universities and colleges. They are not there to promote Sri Lanka's image by appearing on TV or writing in the media, giving speeches at universities or having a conversation one on one with power brokers or power players to counter the transnational Tamil Drealam vicious propaganda or the subtle and insidious attempts to proselytizing Sri Lankan migrant workers.

Here is a thing an ambassador once confided in me; a Foreign Minister (a modern day Puran

Appu) walked into the Embassy on a visit, and the very first thing, shamelessly, came out of his mouth was when he saw his photo hanged on the wall, "I will send a better picture of mine!" Sadly He is not photogenic either, is he? "Triple Gem Bless Sri Lanka"!

Millions of people wear 'Bruce Lee, Mohammed Ali, and ABBA, for that matter 'Che' tee-shirts bought with money out of their pockets, because these idols have left a lasting impression in the minds of millions of people in this world. The political idiots in Sri Lanka force highly educated, well qualified diplomats with a wealth of experience to hang the pictures of un-photogenic foreign ministers on Sri Lankan embassy office walls. So the ambassadors do not have time to do their legacy tasks as they are supposed to do trivial and menial things. The infra dig things which are foisted on the serving ambassadors to do for Foreign Ministry officials on overseas visits are of the nature of being 'diplomat cum chauffeur, diplomat cum grocery cart pusher or diplomat cum panderer'!

Minister counselors are either useless ones from Sri Lanka Administrative Service or good for nothing political appointees. They are not there to promote tourism or tea or get job opportunities for the high literate skilled and non-skilled labor force Sri Lanka has in abundance. They are not on the 'prowl' either to find out the advancements in the medical, agricultural or industrial fields and 'get' it for Sri Lanka as grants rather than loans. Or to sign up quite favorable bilateral agreements for exchange of commerce or delegations of scientists, doctors, engineers etc.

These minister counselor jokers do not know the etiquette either, and one of them once offered me a stiff drink with 'jaggery' for 'bite' or 'finger foods'! I was totally shocked and disgusted. That may be the way these 'diplomatic staff' treat state officials, fellow diplomats, and very important persons to a drink in their posted countries. If it is the case, I say, the damage caused is more than the diplomatic staff post kept vacant!

A vast majority of embassy or high commission staff lack the working knowledge of English, do not know how to answer phones and are not subject matter experts (SMEs). It is an open secret that most of the female diplomatic staff members were interviewed for the job in a Rest House by her Member of Parliament (MP) rather than a ministry interview board in a conference room. Their qualification, beyond the mediocre stenography and clerical work is their ability to stretch, extend and widen their legs and open or contract holes, oops orifices. So they are more suited as masseuse for old and frail ambassadors to give a 'Siddahalepa herbal massage' culminating with masturbation or coitus than the positive image makers to promote what is good about Sri Lanka. If they are male they are no more than the thugs who assaulted opposition supporters, pasted posters or put up cutouts or provided song, wine and women of themselves to thug politicians. So ambassadors extend the service for the former (females) beyond normal tour of duty to continue to receive the 'Gentleman Club' services they provide for them, and for the latter (males) out of fear of losing the ambassadorship and its accompanied perks due to smear campaigns by henchmen or thug politicians going 'berserk' by their henchmen's sneaking! I was wondering why most of the time why some ambassadors leave their families behind in Sri Lanka.

INFORMATIONAL: We knew the truth in 80s that the LTTE had more 'front' offices all over the

world than the number of high commissions/embassies/consulates GOSL had overseas, or the famous saying LTTE used to discourage or as an Information Operations (IO) tactic; the Sinhalese army fights for a 'pay' but tigers fight for a 'cause'! Now everyone in the world knows that the 'paid' army has won, and the tigers that fought for a (lost) 'cause', have been militarily wiped out lock, stock and barrel!

I have explained elsewhere about the pathetic nature of GOSL's Foreign Service or its diplomatic staff's ineptitude, laziness or lack of drive. Due to this pathetic situation, in 80s LTTE was having or had a field day in propaganda operations because the LTTE had a very robust propaganda unit, run by very dedicated intellectuals, in place. They had a global presence or reach and were briefing the sympathetic western government officials on the "Black July" or the victims of army retaliations. The gullible western nations whose citizens are not familiar with the poor nations or the third world nations' internal issues or matters got carried away by either listening to the sob stories or the crocodile tears shed by 'economic asylum seekers' in the guise of political asylum seeking! All this changed with 9/11. As a result, countries like Sri Lanka (against LTTE), Yemen (against AQ), Indonesia (against Jemaah Islamiyah-JI) and the Philippines (against ASG-Abu Seyaf Group) truly and really benefited.

In the 80s Sri Lanka had a rudimentary Psychological Warfare unit headed by bespectacled Brigadier (retd) Wijesekera BA (Ceyl). It was like one-man show. He was known as 'iskole mahathaya' (the teacher) in the military circles, and here is a little known fact about him; he highly recommended to his Gemunu Watch soldiers to buy a gold sovereign a month, out of their monthly pay when they were serving in 70s in Jaffna. He could foresee how gold or 'precious metals'-in stock market terms was going to appreciate. He was the first 'Psy Ops' Director when late Maj Gen, ex-Speaker, PSP Munasinghe was boasting and bragging day in, day out how he was able to kill 'Seelan' after cornering him into a paddy field! All these were before '9/11'.

a. Training: After 9/11 the GOSL received some 'slots' for training in Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs from a superpower. It was the real deal as SLA officers underwent the training with the host nation's plus other nations' officers in the same classroom except for 'highly classified' portions relevant to the host nation's activities overseas. The SLA officers who underwent this type of training came from different units and backgrounds in the army that enabled the Divisions they belonged to have their own man on the ground and 'marching forward' with them for Information Operations and Civil Affairs purposes rather than 'an attachment' doing it for them from a 'central location'. The 'central location' being an air-conditioned room in Colombo 'close to home' away from the enemy rather than vice versa.

Training and experience is a force multiplier (force multiplier definition later).

b. Cyber Activity: The other thing before 9/11 SLA did not have their own website, and if one followed the SLA website during the final war with LTTE one could see SLA had improved, technically and tactically, in leaps and bounds in IO products and messages in audio-visual or print form being put out. I was happy to see the transformation but wondering how much money was being spent and how much of which was played out as I was fully aware of the 'yield' the Sri Lankan 'nation' would get for the money spent on a project.

Though I talked about the military side of Information Operations first but the biggest push or phenomenon mostly came from the Sri Lankan patriotic intellectuals residing or working in the capitals and cities all over the world. They ran websites such as LankaWeb or organizations such as SPURNZ. They put out a very effective IO product we call in the military: 'Story Board'; one page picture story in Portable Document Format (PDF) or in a Power Point slide. It is not a big 'file' so one could e-mail it all around the world to the powers that be to be in the know what the innovative but murderous LTTE has been doing for last three decades in Sri Lanka. These Story Boards varied from "the Anuradhapura Massacre to the assassination of the likes of 'Kadir'.

The other important thing was, as Sri Lanka has a very good pool of Information Technology (IT) professionals, a lot of young and patriotic computer graphic crowd helped in making those 'story boards' out of patriotic feeling or fervor rather than greed for profit.

These patriotic websites and organizations were needed more than ever to counter mushrooming by the day LTTE or LTTE sympathizer websites and media organizations such as TamilNet, TransCurrents, Ground Views, and Lanka News Web, to debunk the LTTE propaganda propagated through them. These sympathizers profess that they want decent solutions for Tamils or Tamils' (perceived) issues. With apologies to Aesop, but in reality every one of them is nothing but a tiger in sheep's clothing. These peaceniks' were/are a media Fifth Column for the LTTE.' As I have explained elsewhere, what decent solution for 90 percent Tamils who are nothing but hypocrites? For the rest 10 percent they have been/are/will be welcome in any part of Sri Lanka, I am sure!

c. Patriotic Activism: Another aspect we fail to note is the activism by overseas Sri Lankan patriots. To give a good example: Remember "dismay and displeasure" shown by the Canadian federal government with the Sri Lankan government over the deportation of Liberal foreign affairs critic, Bob Rae. It was widely believed that it was a result of a dispatch by a lady named 'Mel' alerting the authorities in Sri Lanka. Why the Sri Lankan high commissioner in question has to wake up government officials at 0130 hrs 1:00 a.m. (we call it in military jargon: O dark thirty) if he did his job right. Again, Prevention is better than cure! Mr. High Commissioner here is two words for you to remember from a soldier; always anticipate! That is what happens when high commissioners or ambassadors do not do their job or take measures to protect the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. Activists will take charge or take over or lead from the front. I have described elsewhere what overseas diplomats do on a daily basis.

d. Information Operations: There were very subtle 'Information Operations' by locally or internationally and/or individually or collectively organized groups of intellectuals to create awareness in the capitals of LTTE friendly countries. They were neither paid nor handled by GOSL. They gathered in groups or organized themselves, out of patriotism, into groups across the globe as 'Information Operations Warriors'. I am not going to divulge their Techniques, Tactics and Procedures (TTPs), if by chance a transnational Drealam Tamil onslaught ever to occur those TTPs would come in very handy.

e. Combat Video Camera: 'Embedding' 'ENG' (External News Gathering) crews from major television networks to be sort of 'combat cameramen' and follow the battle and record it as it

happened or unfolded and rushing the tapes on board SLAF aircraft to Anuradhapura or Vauniya to be delivered at TV stations in Colombo to be edited and telecast should be commendable.

Day by day the TV viewers saw the indisputable material evidence of captured LTTE arms, munitions, hideouts, super bunkers, camps, boatyards, tanks, explosive rigged boats, mini subs, suicide vests and what not, this way GOSL could unite people or generate popular support needed for fighting to the finish, and Sri Lankans saw for the first time in their lives the positive signs of the inevitable defeat of 'invincible' tigers. This snowball or avalanche effect of the mounting public support for the fight to finish motivated the military and helped the recruitment drives by military for the first time in recent history.

One thing I noticed was though the narrations on camera were made by the civilian media personnel but the text or contents in the narrations seemed to have been written by SLA IO officers. These video clips were very much sought after by Sri Lankans overseas. There were 'hooked' on these clips, I should say. Lanka Tube and YouTube helped overseas Sri Lankans to readily access these clips.

f. Pitfalls: There is also inherent danger in embedding civilians as 'war correspondents'.

1. They might allegedly remove or lift the items recovered from the enemy for personal use (e.g. the alleged 'Laptop' computers detected at a roadblock in a SLRC TV crew's vehicle)

2. Controversial video clips of alleged atrocities committed by individual soldiers on their own rather than as a government policy (by the way atrocities do happen in any war or conflict due to human weaknesses of individual soldiers). But the controversial clips could be blown out of proportions for the enemy's propaganda advantage e.g. the much debated Channel 4 (C4) video clip or the killing of a wounded and apparently unarmed Iraqi prisoner inside a Fallujah mosque in Iraq during combat operations by a US Marine, witnessed by NBC's Kevin Sites.

3. The so-called war correspondents could sell combat footages, controversial or not, for profit, to the human rights organizations and NGOs (once fallen out or disgruntled to embarrass a government and its military) or use as a bargaining chip for promotions or as a 'get out of jail' card for his alleged misconduct or unlawful acts.

g. Do-It-Yourself: Overseas Sri Lankans who are good at computer graphics and video editing downloaded the clips from the Sri Lanka TV websites and edited them and rereleased to YouTube and Lanka Tube for the wider world. At the same time these IT professional redubbed the LTTE video clips or rearranged then released to YouTube and www.TamilNet.tv to expose the farcical nature of LTTE and as a 'psy ops' tactic. These video clips were also circulated via e-mails free of charge thus GOSL and Sri Lanka military got the much needed popular support from overseas patriotic Sri Lankans.

This way of publicizing war in Sri Lanka among overseas Sri Lankans and the forward march of victorious army helped 'jellying together' the Sri Lankan intellectuals to support the GOSL's war cause. You could see this by looking at the number of patriotic websites or blog sites writing in

support of Sri Lanka that mushroomed in no time; amount or quantity or type of the equipment donated to Security Forces from overseas Sri Lankan communities; the events and rallies organized by Sri Lankans living overseas to counter LTTE rallies or keep other nations' government officials informed. Remember, 'a four feet no inches small made lady' running up to the motorist (a LTTE sympathizer maybe himself a tiger) stopped at a red light in Australia and wresting the LTTE flag from him?

If one really analyzes whatever the success GOSL had in the information operations arena though the LTTE propaganda machine was relentless and worked overtime churning out a lie after a lie, was due to the synergy effect i.e. the intellectuals saw that this time the military was fully capable of winning the war; the government was determined to fight to the finish; there was diplomatic support from unusual quarters; the LTTE was weakened due to Col K's defection and the destruction caused to LTTE men and materials by the Boxing Day tsunami and the ever present LRRP in the Wannai jungles! So the intellectuals decided that it is worth this time to take some time off from their multimillion dollars a year jobs to dedicate their money, time and energy to put an end to the scourge of Tamil terrorism in Sri Lanka. That did happen on or about 18 May 2009 on the banks of the Nanthikadal lagoon!

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