

# National Security Decision Making Structures in India: Lessons from the IPKF Involvement in Sri Lanka

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*A critical appraisal of the national security decision making (NSDM) during IPKF operations is revealing. At every stage, the NSDM was found wanting. The fact that none of the actors possessed the delicate skill or means by which to control events proved that not much thought had gone into the decisions. Involvement of numerous actors made the decision making challenging, which was further complicated by varied and cacophonous inputs and assessments. Overconfidence also created an opaque in the clarity of decisions taken. Lessons from the IPKF involvement are numerous. The study identifies eight important ones: assessment of the situation, NSDM structure, Intelligence, personality factor, political consensus in India and Sri Lanka, inter-ministerial cooperation, inter-services coordination, and operational aspects.*

## Introduction

The case of involvement of Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) is selected for peer study of national security decision making structures for two significant reasons. Firstly, it was for the first time “that an operation of this nature and magnitude was launched by our [Indian] Armed Forces involving, as it did the crossing of a sea obstacle.”<sup>1</sup> Induction of IPKF was the best example of India's force projection outside its borders in the interest of national and regional security.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, although Indian Armed Forces were at the hub, it was not purely a military operation, but a politico-military engagement where all elements of national security decision making were involved. Those elements ranged, apart from the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), internal and external Intelligence agencies, and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The other important actors were the Government of Sri Lanka and the Indian provincial Government of Tamil Nadu. Involvement of numerous actors made the decision making challenging, which was further complicated by varied and cacophonous inputs and assessments. The objective of this essay is to look at the decision making during the IPKF involvement from national security point of view and draw lessons for the future.

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## Security & Political Environment

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Externally, in January 1987, India and Pakistan nearly went to war precipitated by India's major military exercises known as "Operation Brasstacks".<sup>3</sup> Similarly, by Spring 1987, Indian and Chinese troops were right next to each other in a situation of "close confrontation" in Sumdorong Chu Valley.<sup>4</sup> The outcome of both exercises was diplomatically embarrassing. With the ascendance of militancy and the consequent state repression, situation in Sri Lanka was going out of control. The Sri Lankan government under President J. R. Jayewardene was going around seeking military

help from forces inimical to India's strategic interests to quell Tamil militancy.<sup>5</sup> In India's view, this increased volatility of security environment in the region. New Delhi also took serious view of Colombo's offer of oil storage facilities at Trincomalee harbour to an American company and permission to set-up a powerful Voice of America station in its western coast. India was concerned that Bay of Bengal would get drawn into already active Indian Ocean due to Cold War rivalries that was intensely taking place in Afghanistan, not far away from India, in the aftermath of Soviet invasion. In short, India did not want another unsettled front.<sup>6</sup>

Internally, there were disturbances in Punjab made use of by Pakistan to foment more trouble. Political agitations in Kashmir were gradually gathering pace. Huge flow of refugees into Tamil Nadu, as a result of increasing violence in Sri Lanka, once again inflamed passions in the southern federal unit that had the history of uttering secession. India saw this as a threat to its sovereignty and composite culture. There was a demand for action from Tamil Nadu and expectation from Sri Lankan Tamils on the lines of Bangladesh.<sup>7</sup> New Delhi could not afford to ignore the sentiments in Tamil Nadu<sup>8</sup>, while at the same time reaffirming its "principle of not disrupting the unity and territorial integrity of a small neighbour."<sup>9</sup>

At the political front, Bofors arms scandal came to the fore to haunt Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. This became a rallying point for the Opposition parties as was 'Emergency' in the late 1970s. The Congress party lost most of the bye-elections during that period. There was a "strong need to produce a diversion from inconvenient domestic developments and the Sri Lankan situation was

poised just at the point where it could....”<sup>10</sup>

### NSDM during IPKF Involvement: Actors, Structures and Decisions

There were four principal actors that concerned decision making pertaining to IPKF involvement: Government of India (GoI), political forces from Tamil Nadu that includes its Government, Government of Sri Lanka, and LTTE. However, the GoI was the only actor to directly involve in the decision making on IPKF.

The Sri Lankan ethnic question between the minority Tamils and majority Sinhalese came to the fore in less than a decade of Sri Lanka's independence, initially on the language issue (on declaration of Sinhala as the only official language in 1956), and later on various grievances like discrimination in education and employment, colonization of Tamil-dominated areas of island's northeast, human rights violations etc.

On realizing security implications of Sri Lankan ethnic issue, the Indian political leadership decided for an Indian role in solving the crisis. The Sri Lankan ethnic question between the minority Tamils and majority Sinhalese came to the fore in less than a decade of Sri Lanka's independence, initially on the language issue (on declaration of Sinhala as the only official language in 1956), and later on various grievances like discrimination in education and employment, colonization of Tamil-dominated areas of island's northeast, human rights violations etc. With the failure of moderate politics, radicalized Tamil youth resorted to armed means resulting in violent ethnic conflict. At the height of Tamil insurgency in the mid-1980s there were five major and nearly thirty splinter militant groups, prominent among them was the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).<sup>11</sup> Belief in militancy and sympathy for militants gradually rose among Tamils especially after ethnic riots of 1983. With the massive ingress of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees after the 1983 riots, India could not “remain unaffected by the events.”<sup>12</sup>

Despite various national interest considerations, India was genuinely interested in bringing an end to the issue. New Delhi started working for a solution to the ethnic issue that could meet its own national interests; that pacified its domestic passions in Tamil Nadu; that met the sentiments of Sri Lankan Tamils; and that did not violate sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord that was eventually signed on 29 July 1987 was seen as the right antidote.<sup>13</sup> And, an

Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) was inducted from the very next day to implement the Accord.<sup>14</sup> Structures were put in place for periodic decision making on the IPKF.

A three-tiered structure took care of decisions pertaining to the IPKF involvement. At the apex was the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) that consisted of the Prime Minister, and Ministers of External Affairs, Home, Defence, and Finance. At the middle level, a 'Core Group' was formed much before the signing of the Accord to advise the CCPA on various aspects of Indian involvement. Headed usually by the Minister of State for External Affairs, (Cabinet Secretary in his absence), the 'Core Group' comprised of the Chiefs of all three services (usually represented by their deputies), heads of Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and Intelligence Bureau (IB), Foreign Secretary, Defence Secretary, a representative from PMO and the Principal Information Officer. The 'Core Group' regularly met to analyse the evolving situation in Sri Lanka and gave inputs for final decision making by the CCPA. At the third level was an executive body that took care of day-to-day monitoring and implementation of decisions emanating from the CCPA and the 'Core Group'.

This study identifies five major decisions that were taken during 1987 to 1989 i.e. from the preparation to induct IPKF to its withdrawal. The objective here is to critically look at those major decisions to draw lessons for the future.

## I. The Need for Involvement

Considering the critical security environment and existence of various other political pressures, India decided to play an active role in Sri Lanka so as to seek an amicable settlement of the ethnic issue. The Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene also realised that India's role was inevitable especially after witnessing muted international reaction on India's airdrop of food supplies in the wake of economic embargo on Tamil-dominated Jaffna peninsula. But, the Sri Lankan strategy was to make use of this imminence to its advantage. Sri Lanka found that its armed forces could not obtain a military victory over Tamil militants, who were supported by the Indian Intelligence agencies. This became clear especially with the break out of insurrection by armed Sinhala youth led by the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)<sup>15</sup> and the resultant need for more forces to restore normalcy. The economy was not in a good shape and the island state was facing international criticism on human rights front. All

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these factors pushed India to decide for a direct involvement in Sri Lanka. The major challenge for New Delhi, however, was the nature of involvement.

Seen from hindsight, the very decision on the need for Indian involvement was taken without grasping the intricacies of the Sri Lankan conflict. India failed to read into the minds of the two dominant actors: Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. The “failure largely was systemic because policy decisions in the past were often made without the benefit of well conducted policy research and analysis. Structures did not exist which would carry out an objective study of a situation examining its short-term and long-term dynamics and throwing up a set of options with likely scenarios for the policy maker to make his choice.”<sup>16</sup> The then government under Rajiv Gandhi also ignored to build broad-based political consensus before taking the decision. This was to prove costly at a later date.

## II. The Nature of Involvement

At the outset, as outlined earlier, India was clear that the nature of involvement in its southern neighbourhood should,

1. Not violate unity, sovereignty & territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, but at the same time dissuade Colombo from enforcing military solution on the ethnic issue;
2. Meet genuine demands of Sri Lankan Tamils;
3. Take care of India's national interests; and
4. Pacify domestic pressures from the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

Keeping the above four qualifiers in mind a bilateral accord with Sri Lanka was considered as the best option.

However, certain basic assumptions behind the decision to sign the Accord were faulty. Firstly, “Indian assumptions that the LTTE would accept less than Eelam was illusory.”<sup>17</sup> Secondly, India's expectation that settlement outlined in the Accord would work without any problem was faulty. It was a mistake that India did not read into LTTE's mind before finalising the Accord. “The confidence in the Indian camp was so high that they had already informed the world of the Tigers' acceptance of the Accord.”<sup>18</sup> In Sri Lanka, section of government, especially Prime Minister Premadasa and National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali was opposed to the Agreement.<sup>19</sup> The main Opposition party in Sri Lanka – the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) – led by Sirimavo Bandaranaike also opposed the settlement. Widespread riots, mainly fuelled by ultra-

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nationalist JVP, erupted in Colombo against the Accord.<sup>20</sup> Despite all these, the CCPA decided that Rajiv Gandhi would go to Colombo to sign the Accord on 29 July 1987. The political leadership relied on inputs from the Intelligence agencies and the Ministry of External Affairs that Prabhakaran would give up his demand for Eelam and enter into political mainstream. India did not expect the extent of animosity between the two ethnic communities – Tamils and Sinhalese – led by obdurate and nationalistic leadership.

The terms of Accord were hastily drafted in short time without giving much time for debate or discussion. Provisions like cessation of hostilities within 48 hours of the signing of the Agreement (para 2.9); surrender of arms by Tamil militant groups within 72 hours of the cessation of hostilities (para 2.9); holding of provincial elections within three months of the Accord (para 2.8) and so on were far from ground realities. Were the agencies responsible for providing the true picture of ground realities failed in their mission? Or, were the inputs accurate, but not taken seriously by the decision makers? The finding is that overconfidence prevailed both at input and at decision making stages. Most importantly, India's decision to keep the LTTE away during the drafting of the Accord was unwise. Was the 'fear of rejection' stood behind India's covertness? Or, was the LTTE a 'non-entity' to the decision makers? Apart from undermining LTTE's popular support, the Indian leadership was overconfident that the Tigers would accept whatever decided by India on behalf of Tamils. Not revealing the draft of the Accord well in advance increased suspicions of the LTTE manifold.

### III. Induction of IPKF

Although the IPKF got formally inducted starting from 30 July 1987 the Indian Armed Forces were kept in picture since March 1987. Contingency planning was going on from April 1987 on three possible scenarios:

1. Sri Lanka inviting some country unfriendly to India for military assistance and a possible Indian reaction;
2. Sri Lanka inviting India to solve the ethnic crisis and possible induction of Indian Armed Forces to maintain ceasefire.
3. Coup in Sri Lanka by forces opposed to Indian involvement and New Delhi's help to save Jeyewardene's regime.<sup>21</sup>

However, the decision to formally induct IPKF was taken hurriedly. A copy of the draft Accord, for instance, was made available to the Army only few weeks before the induction. There was no position paper and no debate or discussion.<sup>22</sup> Indian Military had less idea of the nature of the mission, the main reason being specific role of the Indian Armed Forces were not detailed in the Accord. The IPKF was just told to "implement the Accord".<sup>23</sup> Agenda of the Indian forces only emerged gradually in response to the ground situation:

1. Separate the two warring groups, i.e. Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF) and the LTTE and ensure observance of the ceasefire.
2. Take over weapons and munitions being handed over by LTTE and other Tamil militant groups.
3. Ensure dismantling of all SLAF camps established after May 1987.
4. Help local population to return to their homes so that they could live in peace.

To these four tasks a fifth – “maintain law and order” – was added at a later date when bloody fighting among Tamil militant groups broke.<sup>24</sup>

Why was the hurry and why was the mission not clear? Although there were contingency plans, India did not seriously expect a military involvement. And there were no preparations on that regard. The decision to send Indian troops, in fact, was on the insistence of Sri Lankan President Jayewardene, who was desperate to ease his own troops to tackle unrest in the south. Nevertheless, nothing prevented the Indian military leadership from taking adequate time to send its personnel (as it did in 1971 in the case of Bangladesh). Here comes the overconfidence of the Chief of the Army Staff, Gen Sundarji, who did not foresee any problem. Even if the Tigers decided to fight, it was maintained, “it will take just a fortnight to take care of them.”<sup>25</sup> The concerned Intelligence agency (R&AW) did not expect the LTTE to fight against India. The staunch belief was “these are our boys, once they have agreed they will not betray.”<sup>26</sup> Going by these assessments the IPKF became “the most ill-prepared mission ever sent by any country.”<sup>27</sup> There was no proper briefing; no position paper; no proper maps, and interpreters; equipments were not adequate and logistics were poor. Lack of inter-services cooperation also came to the fore. Any off-shore military operation traditionally was Navy's responsibility, but Sri Lankan mission was entrusted to the Army. Was this the reason behind poor inter-services coordination? Or was the overall coordination mechanism faulty? It took sometime to sort out coordination mechanism and proper chain of command. Yet, the chain of command was so lengthy that any quick decision became an impossibility.<sup>28</sup> Most importantly, the level of inter-agency coordination was not thought about while dispatching troops.

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#### IV. Use of 'Hard Option'

It was the hardest of all decisions. The scenario of use of force against the LTTE was the most unexpected; the unexpectedness arose because of India's lack of

continuous monitoring and deep analyses of developments in the island. For instance, had the MEA and the R&AW understood Prabhakaran's Sudumalai speech delivered on 4 August 1987 in proper perspective it would not have been difficult to predict what was coming in the future.<sup>29</sup> Even events like death of 12 LTTE cadres including two commanders and fast unto death of Thileepan were not taken as portents. Despite all these, who influenced the final decision to go for the 'hard option'?

Despite the Overall Force Commander Lt. Gen. Depinder Singh's advice "not to go for the hard option", Gen Sundarji admonished him "not to adopt a defeatist attitude".<sup>30</sup> Having little knowledge of ground realities the COAS believed that the LTTE would be on its knees soon. Other Indian organs, especially the R&AW, underestimated LTTE's military acumen, its organizational skills, use of civilians as shield and intelligence gathering, improvised armaments and explosive devices, and high motivation. On the whole, "there was a very basic lack of judgment about what Prabhakaran's intentions were."<sup>31</sup>

Thus it is evident that the decision to use force against the LTTE was not unanimous. The effect was visible during the process of operations. The Army did not have sufficient time to prepare its men psychologically; the mindset of the soldiers and commanders, until then sympathetic to the LTTE, were to be changed.<sup>32</sup> Accurate intelligence was in shortage. The Army could not rely on R&AW's inputs for operational purposes. The Army set-up its own Intelligence structure at a later date. Overall, as one of the senior IPKF commanders puts it, "What the soldier requires most is a set of well-defined tasks and the wherewithal with which to carry them out. This was missing. Also missing and unknown to field commanders was the 'higher intention' and the bigger picture."<sup>33</sup>

When the operations were on, disagreements in decision making on various issues among the concerned organs of the Indian government persisted. Two issues stood out. Firstly, the MEA and the R&AW claim that they were not taken into confidence in the decision to assault LTTE's "Tactical Headquarters". It was indeed an operational matter, but "much of it could have been avoided" had there been consensual decision on the operation.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, despite knowing

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that the mobilisation was not sufficient, and despite aware that urban counter-insurgency was not preferable, why “capture of Jaffna at the earliest” was made as the mission of the IPKF? Two factors were responsible to select this objective:

1. Jaffna was a symbol of LTTE power; all LTTE facilities were entrenched in Jaffna. By capturing Jaffna it was assumed that LTTE could be weakened.
2. A specific deadline was given to capture Jaffna just to meet the deadline of Rajiv's address to the US Congress.

Thus, the reasoning behind a risky decision like capture of Jaffna was more of egoistic rather than based on hard thinking. The Indian force ended-up capturing Jaffna, but at the cost of many lives.

Secondly, when there were feelers from the LTTE for conditional (that the IPKF move to pre-10 October position) ceasefire sometime in the end 1987, a decision on that became difficult due to division among the principal actors: Army, R&AW and MEA. The Army was open to unconditional ceasefire, but MEA and R&AW advised for further intensifying the Operation. The Indian High Commission in Colombo assessed that “the LTTE collapse was imminent.”<sup>35</sup> However, at a later period, the R&AW was working on a ceasefire with the LTTE without the knowledge of MEA. The Army was informed, but not provided the whole details of the process. One organ was not aware of how the other organ dealt with the issue.<sup>36</sup> Even during 'Core Group' meetings “each agency wished their views prevailed.”<sup>37</sup> Coordination between the Centre and the state of Tamil Nadu could have been better. For instance, Tamil Nadu police and its 'Q' branch did not pursue the LTTE at appropriate time even when the IPKF gave leads. The wounded LTTE cadres got treated at hospitals in Tamil Nadu and went back to fight the Indian forces in Sri Lanka. Tamil Nadu government turned a blind eye to the continued flow of arms and money from the state to the Tigers. The LTTE radio stations were also operating from Tamil Nadu coast which the state did not cooperate to close down. The Tigers enjoyed financial and political patronage and when arrested they were released by orders from local political bosses.<sup>38</sup> On its part, the LTTE knew of the divisions among Indian organisations and cunningly played to further deepen the divide. Since there was no proper sharing of information between the various actors involved, the LTTE played its card effectively.<sup>39</sup> Most importantly factoring in the Sri Lankan government did not contribute to a good decision making. For instance, President Jayewardene unthoughtfully passed on confidential correspondence

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between him and the R&AW chief to the then High Commissioner Dixit; the R&AW felt betrayed. This made the very purpose of the secret mission – ceasefire and peace talks – with the Tigers redundant.<sup>40</sup>

## V. Withdrawal of IPKF

On becoming president, Ranasinghe Premadasa, who openly opposed the Accord, demanded withdrawal of IPKF by 29 July 1989, the second anniversary of signing of the Agreement. The demand came as a surprise to his own Cabinet; so to the Indian Government. Rajiv Gandhi, although rejected the ultimatum, realized that the decision to withdraw should be made sooner than later. Much earlier, the Indian opposition parties were critical of rising IPKF casualties while “fighting someone else's war”.<sup>41</sup> As the general elections were approaching in India, Rajiv Gandhi was also advised to pronounce his decision to withdraw IPKF so as to avoid already weakening electoral prospects of the Congress. Above all, secret understanding between the Sri Lankan government under President Premadasa and the LTTE against the IPKF further compelled the Indian decision makers for withdrawal.<sup>42</sup> The initial absence of political consensus both in India and Sri Lanka on the decision to induct IPKF came to haunt at this juncture.

But, was the mission accomplished? Were the objectives for which the troops sent achieved? Lack of clarity of mission came to the fore when these two questions were asked. To save face the decision makers fixed conduct of provincial council elections for the now merged northeast province as the “terminal point”. And the IPKF succeeded in “conducting violence-free and high-turnout provincial, presidential and parliamentary elections in the North East, the first after 11 years.”<sup>43</sup> The Indian peace keepers came back in March 1990 without achieving the larger objective of “restoring peace” in the island.

## Lessons from IPKF Involvement for NSDM

A critical appraisal of the NSDM during IPKF operations is revealing. At every stage, the national security decision making was at fault. The fact that none of the actors possessed the delicate skill or means by which to control events prove that not much thought had gone into the decisions. Overconfidence also created an opaque in the clarity of decisions. Lessons from the IPKF involvement are numerous, but eight important ones are outlined below:

### 1. Assessment

Good decisions inherently involve proper assessment of the situation and consideration of all available alternatives. The main issue that confronted the decision making at that point of time was the absence of proper structure to study issues concerning national security. There were no assessments on long-

term political consequences. Concerned actors “made decisions based on their perception and the sixth sense”<sup>44</sup> It is, therefore, important to establish structures for objective study of crisis situations. The National Security Council (NSC) established at a later date partly serves the purpose, but not the best structure to provide inputs for a good decision making on national security issues. The NSC should serve like a think tank. Experts on various fields and subjects should be included in the decision making. National Security should not be the sole domain of government servants; keeping non-government people out of decision making structure is not a good option. A 'Revolving Door' model of incorporating various experts/practitioners from time-to-time depending on the issue can be explored. Accordingly, the NSC should enjoy powers to include anybody as necessary for appropriate academic assessment.

## 2. NSDM Structure

The IPKF experience did not suggest a concrete NSDM structure. Opinion is divided between having similar 'Core Group' structure and NSC taking care of the job done by the 'Core Group'. However, it is recommended to have a tailor-made body depending on the crisis, but with solid inputs flowing from the NSC. The decision making body should be structured in such a way that it maintains a loop with the ground.<sup>45</sup> The NSC, otherwise, is found to be too cumbersome to make timely decisions. The NSC should also be able to provide secretarial assistance to the tailor-made decision making bodies. Such a structure would inherit both formal and dynamic qualities.

## 3. Intelligence

The role of proper Intelligence is closely connected to assessments. Failure of Intelligence agencies in understanding the ground realities and especially LTTE's real intentions, strength and character led to majority of wrong assumptions and decisions. The Kargil crisis also brought out the issue. Was it because of problem in training? Or was it because of faulty intelligence gathering methods? Or was it a problem of the existing structure? All these questions have been addressed in greater detail by the Kargil Review Committee Report. The IPKF experience suggests that the concerned nodal agency (read Armed Forces) should have its own independent Intelligence not only on operational matters, but on every aspect of involvement. The Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) can have more teeth, resources and autonomy.

## 4. Personality Factor

The personality of three key figures came to prominence in the decision making process pertaining to the IPKF: Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, COAS Gen Sundarji and India's High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, J. N. Dixit. Rajiv Gandhi was considered to have “less experience, authoritarian and at the same time

easily influenced by his coterie”. Gen Sundarji was “more articulate, but less humble”. J. N. Dixit was known for his “egoistic nature”. Personality invariably influenced the quality of decisions made. How to overcome this? Is there any way to shield decisions from the influence of personalities involved in the decision making? Taking on from Herbert Simon, scholars like Daniel Kahneman and Ariel Rubinstein propose 'Bounded Rationality' model to bind the decision makers by set of rules and procedures in which personality factors get filtered out.<sup>46</sup> However, in a developing democratic country like India, where personality factor plays vital role, whether this model works is a big question. Yet, worth exploring.

### 5. Political Consensus

In a multi-party democratic set-up, where governments change frequently, political consensus is a necessity to sustain any vital decision of national importance. The IPKF involvement clearly shows that those decisions that were devoid of political consensus either ended in a failure or were unsustainable. However, is it possible to seek consensus in countries like India and Sri Lanka where 'plebiscitary politics' is the order of the day? Is it not time-consuming? In cabinet form of governments like India, the cabinet of the day take decisions of vital national importance. However, a method can be adopted to coopt at least important opposition parties in important national security decisions that require sustenance irrespective of party in power. To avoid delays, a specific timeframe can be fixed for a final decision to come through.

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### 6. Inter-Ministry Cooperation

Despite being a politico-military operation, the IPKF involvement saw very less synchrony between political and military leadership. During IPKF Operations the Army was much closer to reality than any other agency. Yet, the views of the Armed Forces were not given adequate weightage. The lesson is that the concerned agency should have greater say in the final decisions. Yet another lesson is the need to harmonise political decision making with military capability. In an operation like IPKF, a civil-military liaison office could work better to achieve the above objective. It is wise to keep all agencies on board on all decisions, big or small. Covert maneuvers would spoil the harmony.

### 7. Inter-Services Coordination

The IPKF operations did not have the best of inter-services coordination.

Narrow service interests and hierarchy hindered decisions and, in turn, overall operations. Whatever coordination that was available was not by design, but basically because of personal rapport among commanders. For a better inter-services coordination there is a need for a 'unified command system', in short a Chief of Defence Staff. Apart from having a coordinating authority, the mindset of services should change. For this, more joint services institutions should be established, for instance, like Armed forces college instead of separate war colleges for each arm.

## 8. Operational

Operationally, the IPKF involvement suggested that any military involvement overseas should be swift and short like in Maldives ('Operation Cactus'). Time is a constraint if military is involved in another country. If there are any indications of prolonged involvement, better not to engage.



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1. Depinder Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka* (Noida: Trishul Publications, 1991), p. 38.
  2. 'Operation Cactus' in Maldives was yet another example of India's involvement overseas to demonstrate its willingness to provide assistance whenever sought by its neighbours.
  3. For details see Kanti P. Bajpai et al., *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (Urbana: Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, University of Illinois, 1995).
  4. Titled 'Exercise Chequerboard', it involved several divisions of the Indian Army and many squadrons of the IAF. Tensions lowered only with the visit of India's External Affairs Minister to China in May 1987.
  5. India especially was concerned about involvement of China, Pakistan and Israel. The involvement of US and UK was indirect.
  6. For critical analyses of security concerns of India see S. D. Muni, *Pangs of Proximity: India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993).
  7. The then dominant moderate Sri Lankan political party Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) leader Amirthalingam firmly believed that India would certainly intervene in Sri Lanka to "liberate" Tamils on the lines of Bangladesh. See A. J. Wilson, *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism: Its Origins and Development in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2000). In fact, PLOTE, one of the largest militant groups in the 1980s, brought out a small pamphlet called 'Vangam Thantha Paadam' ('Lessons from Bangladesh') in the early eighties to emulate a corollary.
  8. To demonstrate this, India airdropped on 04 June 1987 ('Operation Eagle') food and other essential items to Jaffna residents, then under economic embargo, with much resentment of the Government of Sri Lanka.
  9. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's statement quoted in J. N. Dixit, *Assignment Colombo* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1998), p. 4.
  10. "Beyond the Tamil Issue," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 01 August 1987, p. 1261.
  11. The other dominant groups were Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS) and Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF).
  12. Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, while rejecting Bangladesh type intervention in Sri Lanka on behalf of the Tamils, said in the Indian Parliament 'India stands for the independence, unity and integrity of Sri Lanka.... However, because of the historical, cultural and other such close ties between the peoples of the two countries, especially between the Tamil community of Sri Lanka and us, India cannot remain unaffected by the events there.' See A. J. Wilson, *The Break-up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict* (London: Christopher Hurst, 1988), p. 203.

13. In this regard Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi claimed that the Agreement was a "major landmark in the four decades of India's freedom. It not only rendered justice to the minority communities on the island but also removed the opportunity for hostile forces to destabilize the region." See *The Hindu*, 03 August 1987.
14. Point 6 of the Annexure to the Agreement stated: "The President of Sri Lanka and the Prime Minister of India also agree that in the terms of paragraph 2.14 and paragraph 2.16(c) of the agreement, an Indian peace keeping contingent may be invited by the President of Sri Lanka to guarantee and enforce the cessation of hostilities, if so required."
15. JVP organised its second rebellion between 1987 and 1989 principally on anti-Indian agenda. It tried to project "Indian expansionism" as a threat to Sri Lanka when the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) landed in the Island. The agenda gradually shifted to rallying against provincial council elections, which JVP argued would divide the country.
16. Anand K. Verma, "Sri Lanka Tamils: Anatomy of Indian Involvement", *Indian Defence Review*, Oct-Dec 2007, p. 92.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
18. Rajesh Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco: Peace Keepers at War* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1990), p. 13.
19. Division within Sri Lankan Cabinet on the Accord was captured by the then Indian High Commissioner J. N. Dixit in his note to the Indian leadership along with draft Accord: "Gamini Disanayake is promoting peace, Lalith Athulathmudali is promoting war and both are being promoted by President Jayewardene." Quoted in T. D. S. A. Dissanayaka, *War or Peace in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Popular Prakasam, 2004), p. 113.
20. When the JVP realized that the anti-India factor could be a greater mobilizing factor among the Sinhalese in the mid-1980s, it changed its earlier view on India being a "progressive and communist friendly state" to indulge in India-bashing. The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord of 1987 was compared to the Kandyan Convention of 2 March 1815 by which the British took control of the Kandyan Kingdom. Rohana Wijeweera, in his 'Solutions to the Tamil Eelam Question', accused the Tamil militants of being agents of Tamil Nadu for carrying out "Cholan ambitions". Drawing such parallels, though illogical, heightened the Sinhalese opposition to the Accord.
21. Kadian, n. 18, p. 18.
22. Interview with Mr P. R. Chari (then with the Ministry of Defence)
23. Depinder Singh, n. 1, p. xiv.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
25. Interview with J. N. Dixit (the then Indian Commissioner in Sri Lanka), by Josy Joseph for rediffmail.com dated March 2000.
26. *Ibid.* The then R&AW chief, Anand Verma, however, claims in a recent article that the "Indian Intelligence had misgivings about this agreement and had advised against the induction of the Indian Military into Sri Lanka." See Verma, n. 16, p. 94.
27. Interview with Lt. Gen. A. S. Kalkat, 05 June 2008.
28. For instance, when the Sri Lankan navy was preparing to take the 17 captured LTTE cadres to Colombo from Jaffna in September 1987 for "interrogation", delay in decision by India on their release led to 12 of them committing suicide. This gave a firm excuse for the LTTE to turn against the IPKF.
29. Indian agencies went by final remarks of the speech which affirmed LTTE's compulsion to lay down arms, but ignored initial part of the speech that clearly reflected what was inside Prabhakaran's mind. For full text of the speech see <http://www.tamilnation.org/ltte/vp/87suthumalai.htm>
30. Depinder Singh, n. 1, p. 114.
31. Interview with J. N. Dixit, by Josy Joseph for rediffmail.com dated March 2000. Also see J. N. Dixit, *Assignment Colombo* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1998).
32. Depinder Singh, n. 1, p. 116.
33. Ashok K. Mehta, "Tackling the Tigers," *Seminar*, No. 479, July 1999.
34. Interview with J. N. Dixit, by Josy Joseph for rediffmail.com dated March 2000.
35. Depinder, n. 1, p. 130.
36. For instance, an LTTE emissary, "Jhonny", was shot by the IPKF personnel who were not aware that he was a "peace messenger" between the LTTE and the R&AW.
37. Interview with one of the 'Core Group' members who wished not to be quoted. 31 May 2008.
38. For more details on Tamil Nadu connections see D. R. Kaarthikeyan & Radhavinod Raju, *Triumph of Truth: The Rajiv Gandhi Assassination - The Investigation* (New Delhi: The New Dawn Press, 2004) and *The Jain Commission Report*.
39. One of the ways was through various propaganda materials effectively distributed in India and abroad. Notable among them include *A Nation Betrayed*, *The Satanic Force*, *You too India*, *India and Eelam Tamil Crisis*, *Indian Military Offensive*, *An Unjust War against Tamils*, and *Indo-Sri Lanka Accord - LTTE's Point of View*.
40. Interview with one of the 'Core Group' members involved in the decision making during the IPKF operations who wished not to be quoted), 08 June 2008.
41. "V P Singh says Indian jawans dying for 'no national purpose'," *The Times of India*, 17 September 1988.

42. Premadasa went to the extent of arming the LTTE to get the IPKF out. The report of Presidential Commission to inquire into the assassination of Lt. Gen. Denzil Kobbekaduwa records in greater detail each delivery of weapons to the LTTE, the names of the officers involved and the consequences of this policy.
43. Maj. Gen. Ashok Mehta, "The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and Indian Peace Keeping Forces: The Counterinsurgency Campaign", paper presented at the international conference on 'Insights from India: Lessons from India's Experience for the Future of Counterinsurgency Policy,' Neerana Fort palace, 11-13 March 2008.
44. Interview with one of the 'Core Group' members involved in the decision making during the IPKF operations who wished not to be quoted, 08 June 2008.
45. One of the commonly cited criticisms by the IPKF field commanders was that "higher echelons" did not take inputs from them.
46. For details see Ariel Rubinstein, *Modeling Bounded Rationality* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998).