

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is on the role that media and the military can collectively play in achieving a sustainable peace in Sri Lanka. First the study briefly reviews the historical background of the ethnic conflict and evolving relationship between the media and the military from independence to present. Secondly the portrayal of the military role by media, during the communal riots in 1983 up to Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) is analyzed. Thirdly the CFA up to the present is analyzed in order to ascertain the future media environment and its impact on the future military operations. Finally the dissertation devote a section to find out better systems to formulate and improve the cordial relationship between media and the military towards winning the hearts and minds of the general public in the Sri Lankan conflict.

Sri Lanka's media and military relations received prominence after the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna insurrection in 1971 and the escalation of the separatist violence in the mid 1983. With the development of the electronic technology, people obtained information at a faster rate than before. The public was keen on the day to day occurrences of the Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. Another contributing factor was that a large amount of annual expenditure spent from the national budget for the war continuously alarmed the tax paying citizens of the country. In this context military also needed the media in a democratic country for transparency and accountability.

The media's power is increasing rapidly due to technological advances made. Media can provide information to the public within few hours if not minutes today. In the age of mass communication with communication satellites and digital technology has

made it impossible to hide/blackout information. The presence of media will rapidly shape national and international opinion of the conflict. Therefore the time has come for the media and the military to maintain close links and interact with each other.

Finally the research findings lead to the formulation of the following recommendations. State censorship must not be imposed unless absolutely necessary rather, media must be encouraged to impose self – censorship in the national interest of the country. When the need arise the media unit and spokesperson well trained with journalist background is a necessity for the military. They could coordinate and build up a rapport with general, national and international media. Sri Lankan media and the military should understand the very important role that they have to play to achieve sustainable peace in Sri Lanka.