

ABSTRACT

There is growing evidence that asymmetrical warfare has become a strategy of choice among dissident, extremist political groups and will be the most likely national and international security threat in the 21st century. Operating in small, covert groups and having no recognized sovereign territory or population to defend, asymmetrical combatants can engage in violent, lethal activities with far less risk of being totally overwhelmed by reprisals that a nation-state might face. Sri Lanka faced the same problem for the last 30 years and fought the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), dubbed the world's most ruthless terrorist outfit. However, Sri Lanka defeated the LTTE and eradicated terrorism within three years.

Asymmetric warfare is an historical outcome of the warfare on land and at sea. For an island nation like Sri Lanka, after evolving via experiencing an enemy who used asymmetric tactics and methods, these lessons of war fighting offer many avenues for academic studies. In fact, today many states face a modern day trial in trying to deal with asymmetric warfare. There are two different viewpoints on the relationship between asymmetric warfare and terrorism. In the modern context, asymmetric warfare is increasingly considered a component of fourth generation warfare. When practiced outside the laws of war, it is often defined as terrorism, though rarely by its practitioners or their supporters. Asymmetrical warfare organizations come in all sizes, from small independent local groups to large multi-national operational organizations and support networks, terrorist and insurgency support groups. All asymmetrical organizations share the same basic psychological strategic objectives and the same predilection for the use of covert, unconventional military tactics. Where they might differ is in the scope of operations. The research factors reveal that the thinking patterns and the overall mind set within Sri Lankan armed forces, diplomatic, intelligence and law enforcement communities to meet and combat evolving patterns that include non-state actors and asymmetric warfare. Defeating the LTTE allowed the Sri Lankan armed forces to learn some key lessons in defend the country in the future and these lessons can be very useful to Sri Lankan military, policy makers, academics and practitioners of national security. The purpose of this research is to identify to understand the dynamics of asymmetric warfare in Sri Lankan context.