Background Information

Although the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka was under British ruling up until 1948, it has since become a prominent country amongst others within the South Asian subcontinent. Within the last fifty years, Sri Lanka has seen stronger developments within their service, industry, and agricultural sectors. Despite an increase in economic prosperity, Sri Lanka has suffered from internal issues between the government and the separatist militant group known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam which is still a major issue. Sri Lanka has welcomed the support of the United Nations in the past and also continues to support world organizations such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

Sri Lanka and Human Rights

As a result of the civil war taking place within Sri Lanka, the Government has been forced to interject due to the mass violations of human rights committed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Such have included several attacks on civilians, alongside child soldier recruitment, torture, and widespread politically motivated murders. Sri Lanka recognizes such human rights catastrophes and has taken action within the past few years to aid those who suffer as a result of such terror. Sri Lanka’s dedication to the maintenance of human rights within the country has always been a part of the country’s national foreign policy. It has signed all seven major human rights Conventions and Treaties, such as The Convention on the Rights of the Child. Sri Lanka served in the UN Commission on Human Rights during four different periods, the most recent being 2003 to 2005. The Sri Lankan government also dedicates itself to working with local NGOs and has created an initiative of an Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Human Rights Issues. This group holds meetings on a month-to-month basis to coordinate Government agencies for investigations on alleged human rights violations. Furthermore, the Permanent Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee on Human Rights provides policy directives for the Government when necessary.

The recent government withdrawal from the Ceasefire Agreement was not to undermine the purpose of the CFA, but it was meant to demonstrate the intolerance the Sri Lankan government has for the lack of cooperation on behalf of the LTTE. The LTTE has used the past six years since the agreement was formed to rebuild their military strength and has not contributed to the peace process. The Sri Lankan Government has found that it needs to take a different approach towards this issue, and while it appreciates concerns from the international community, it must do what is necessary in order to achieve peace and stability within the country.

Sri Lanka and Children’s Rights

One of the most pressing issues and concerns for Sri Lanka revolves around the children of Sri Lanka. The recruitment of child soldiers and the constant violations of the rights of children as completed by the LTTE have prevented children from having access to
the resources that the government is slowly establishing for future generations. The Government of Sri Lanka has implemented various programs to enhance and support the education system which in turn have delivered higher literacy rates. In fact, the Sri Lankan government is well on its way to reaching the “Primary Universal Education” Millennium Goal well before 2015. In order to protect the children, a legal framework has been implemented to tackle any cases surrounding the violation of children’s rights and child soldiers.

Such efforts have been undermined by the LTTE due to their disregard for such frameworks and the Government Sri Lanka has, and wishes to continue, to work with UNICEF and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict created by the Security Council Resolution 1612 to ensure the continuous protection of children as well as the rehabilitation of former child soldiers. Sri Lanka does not tolerate the violation of any of such rights and believes that all countries should seeks ways to create and contribute towards national rehabilitation and reintegration programs which will protect children from being apprehended by terrorist organizations and similar groups.

**Sri Lanka and Iran’s Civil Nuclear Program**

In 2004, Sri Lanka became a board member of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Appreciating the seriousness of the debate over Iran’s nuclear program, Sri Lanka released statements regarding the matter that it was under investigation by the IAEA and subsequently its board members. In November 2007, three years after the fact, Sri Lanka publicly acknowledged its support for Iran’s peaceful nuclear program during a meeting between Sri Lanka’s President Mahinda Rajapaksa and Iran’s Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki.

In the past, the Sri Lankan Government has stated open support for anyone who wishes to develop a nuclear program. Sri Lanka often questions the idea of having “Nuclear Powers”, and that within the international community; every country should have the right to produce a nuclear program under peaceful conditions.

**Sri Lanka and Regional Economic Development**

Sri Lanka’s relations with regional countries are a core part of its foreign policy. It has focused on creating and facilitating person-to-person relationships and has embarked on several Presidential visits to member countries of organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Through the SAARC, Sri Lanka has played a leading role in urging member countries to interact with other large regional organizations such as the European Union and ASEAN. Sri Lanka has particularly focused on establishing stronger regional relationships because it believes that the South Asian subcontinent can collectively become a stronger and more dominant economic player in the world. Sri Lanka has continued to encourage this by implementing similar regional focused policies in organizations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) since 1998, and the Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation Agreement (BIMST-EC). Through all of these ventures, Sri Lanka has also built upon bilateral relations with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, and in particular, India, one of the booming economies of South Asia. It continues to assure and encourage countries to take an active role within any of these organizations and to build bilateral and multilateral relationships within the region, and with the world.  

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1 INSERT FOOTNOTE
Background Information

____________________ and Nuclear Non-Proliferation

____________________ and the Conflict in Darfur

____________________ and Kosovo’s Independence