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**NAVAL
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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**IMPACT OF CHANGING EXTERNAL CONDITIONS ON
COUNTERINSURGENCY: THE SRI LANKAN
EXPERIENCE**

by

Nilantha P. Premaratne

December 2015

Thesis Advisor:
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Anshu Nagpal Chatterjee
S. Paul Kapur

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**IMPACT OF CHANGING EXTERNAL CONDITIONS ON
COUNTERINSURGENCY: THE SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(COMBATING TERRORISM: POLICY & STRATEGY)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

After thirty years of protracted war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Sri Lanka defeated its long-lasting terrorist insurgency in May 2009. Sri Lanka's victory surprised the world. This thesis examines why Sri Lanka's counterterrorism strategy succeeded in 2009 when it had previously failed. Discriminatory government policies, the economic liberalization in the 1980s, and external support fueled Tamil insurgency and terrorism on the island. International settings in the 1990s enabled the Tamil diaspora to consolidate support in the Western world, and LTTE evolved as a hybrid terrorist organization. The behavior of the LTTE and its sympathizers overseas explains how the changing external conditions affected insurgency and terrorism in Sri Lanka. Though globalization and the end of the Cold War created new patterns of transnational terrorism, the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack and the U.S.-led "war on terror" changed the world's opinion about terrorism. Therefore, this thesis argues that the change in international opinion on accommodating insurgency and terrorism after December 2001 strengthened the cooperation among countries combatting terrorism and had an impact on counterterrorism in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan victory proved that counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts succeeded after the external conditions changed.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BTF	British Tamil Forum
CSIS	Canadian Security Intelligence Service
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Forces
JOC	Joint Operation Center
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MIA	Missing in Action
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
TNA	Tamil National Alliance
TNT	Tamil New Tigers
TRO	Tamil Rehabilitation Organization
TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
USD	United States Dollar
UN	United Nations
UNP	United National Party
WTF	World Tamil Forum

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka—once known as Ceylon—is located in the Indian Ocean, twenty-one miles off the southern tip of India. This tiny island, which has twenty-two million people, is composed of a multi-ethnic and multilingual plural society. According to the *World Fact Book*, the majority, the Sinhalese people who speak the Sinhala language, represents 74.9 percent of the population, while the minority Tamils represent 15.4 percent and speak Tamil. The two communities are divided along religious lines of Buddhism and Hinduism with a small minority of them, 7.4 percent, being Christians. Muslims on the island are the third largest ethnic group, representing 9.2 percent of the population and speaking both Sinhala and Tamil. The remaining 0.5 percent is comprised of other ethnic minority groups such as the Malay, the Burgher, and indigenous people, the Vedda.¹

At its independence in 1948, the “Pearl of the Indian Ocean,” Sri Lanka, was expected “to be a success story in the developing world.”² However, the Tamil insurgency movement started in early 1970 and lasted until May 2009. This protracted conflict caused nearly 90,000 deaths, and “its economic cost...have exceeded 20 billion USD, nearly twice the size of Sri Lanka’s 1996 Gross Domestic Product.”³ In 2009, “Sri Lanka militarily defeated the first insurgency and the terrorist campaign of the 21st century. Although the threat of terrorism was neutralized in Sri Lanka, it will remain a world-wide threat for many years to come.”⁴ Therefore, it is important to examine Sri Lanka’s successful 2009 counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy, because it may help resolve similar terrorist movements in the future. Maintaining peace in Sri Lanka is important due to its geographic position in the Indian Ocean. Peace in Sri Lanka affects the peace and stability of the entire South Asian region. Since the majority of world sea

¹ Central Intelligence Agency, “The World Fact Book: Sri Lanka,” last modified September 28, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/ce.html>.

² Nikolaos Biziouras, *The Political Economy of Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Economic Liberalization, Mobilizational Resources, and Ethnic Collective Action* (London: Routledge, 2014), 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jayathilaka et al., “Defeating Terrorism the Sri Lankan Experience,” *Business Today*, July 2011, 43.

trade is centered in the Indian Ocean, as pointed out by scholars, a peaceful Indian Ocean region directly affects world peace and stability.⁵

From 1977 to 2006, the successive governments of Sri Lanka led by four previous presidents have applied the universally accepted theories and principles of counterinsurgency in fighting Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka without success. Finally, after thirty years of protracted war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Sri Lankan state defeated its long-lasting insurgency in May 2009. The defeat of the LTTE shocked a vast group of interested parties in the international arena, because the counterterrorism strategies recommended by the counterterrorism literature had not worked until then.

The success of the Sri Lankan government over the LTTE could not have been possible if the United States of America had not declared its “war on terror.” Many powerful countries and international organizations changed their perspective on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency policies after December 2001. This contributed to the enforcement of many restrictions on terrorism and its related activities worldwide. Therefore, as a result of the changing environment worldwide after December 2001, international terrorism and insurgency declined. The Sri Lankan government was able to exploit this changing situation to strengthen its counterinsurgency mechanism while the LTTE was not in a position to sustain its capabilities.

A change in international opinion about insurgency and terrorism after December 2001 strengthened the cooperation among countries in combatting terrorism and had an impact on counterterrorism in Sri Lanka as well. On September 12, 2001, the day after the most brutal terrorist attack took place, “the United Nations [UN] Security Council passed Resolution 1386 (2001)”⁶ in which it denounced the attack as a “threat to international peace and security and expressed its readiness to combat all forms of

⁵ Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2010), 5–16.

⁶ R. James Woolsey, “Forwarded,” in *Combatting Terrorism: Strategies of Ten Countries*, ed. Yonah Alexander (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 375.

terrorism.”⁷ Other international organizations, too, outlined various recommendations to face the “growing threats of terrorism.”⁸ Although the LTTE was in an advantageous position at this time, the fact that it unilaterally declared a ceasefire in December 2001 indicates how the changes in the global and domestic environment “affected both coerced and willing LTTE contributors.”⁹ This behavior of the LTTE and their supporters overseas explains how the changing external conditions affected counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. The Sri Lankan case is a clear example of how counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts began to work more effectively after external conditions changed.

A. RESEARCH QUESTION

Without external support, it was difficult for terrorists or insurgents to wage a protracted war against a legitimate government. Empirical evidence has proven that insurgents or terrorists have always counted on foreign assistance for their logistical and ideological requirements.¹⁰ This was the case with the LTTE as well. It was impossible for the LTTE to survive nearly thirty years without external assistance, especially in an island nation like Sri Lanka. As discussed in the counterinsurgency literature, Bruce Hoffman and Jennifer Morrison Taw emphasized the importance of external cooperation amongst governments and security forces to fight against terrorism or insurgency. “Foreign collaboration and counterinsurgency campaigns are capricious, depending completely on the individual political and economic interests of the countries involved.”¹¹ Therefore, this thesis examines the question of why Sri Lanka’s counterterrorism strategy succeeded in 2009 when it had previously failed. What were the variables that changed and allowed it to work in 2009, and how might Sri Lanka’s experience be applied to more general counterterrorism theories?

⁷ Woolsey, “Forwarded,” in *Combatting Terrorism: Strategies of Ten Countries*, 375.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 375–376.

⁹ C. Christine Fair, *Urban Battle Fields of South Asia: Lesson Learned from Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2004), 65–66.

¹⁰ The *IRA* in Northern Ireland and *Montoneros* in Argentina could be examples.

¹¹ Bruce Hoffman and Jennifer Morrison Taw, *A Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Insurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1992), 127. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/notes/N3506>.

B. RESEARCH DESIGN

The Sri Lankan case is significant to study as a single case study because, after thirty years of sheer struggle using counterinsurgency methods, Sri Lanka defeated the LTTE. I show that the setting did not change domestically, and neither did the state's strategies. This requires a comparative analysis of different timeframes. While there are statistics about deaths, military, and support structure, they did not help explain the international setting. Therefore, this qualitative research, based on a single case study, covers four timeframes: the first is from the years 1976 to 1985.¹² The second is from 1985 to 1992.¹³ The third covers the period from 1992 to 2001,¹⁴ and the fourth is from 2002 to 2009.¹⁵ The research assesses the empirical evidence to test the two potential causes—the impact in Sri Lanka of the change in international opinion on defeating terrorism and insurgency, and the influence of India's stance on counterinsurgency in Sri Lanka.

C. HYPOTHETICAL ARGUMENT

This study presents two hypotheses. The first hypothesis argues that the change in international opinion after September 11, 2001, affected foreign collaboration, which then had an impact on the defeat of the terrorist and insurgency movement in Sri Lanka. Thus, the first assumption is that if the “war on terror” had not been declared by the United States in 2001, it might not have been possible for the government of Sri Lanka to defeat terrorism and insurgency on the island in 2009. The civil war would have continued. The second hypothesis explores the Sri Lankan government's role in managing India during the period from 2002 to 2009. India's influence on the separatist movement in Sri Lanka had a direct impact on the Sri Lankan government's policy

¹² The LTTE was formed on May 5, 1976. India's opinion on the government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) fighting the insurgency shifted after the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984.

¹³ During this period, the Indian government under Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi pioneered peace talks between the GoSL and the LTTE. He also inducted the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka after the Indo-Lanka pact. An LTTE suicide bomber assassinated Rajiv Gandhi on May 21, 1991.

¹⁴ After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, once again the political stance of India had changed over the Sri Lankan issue.

¹⁵ This was the period since 9/11 up to the defeat of the LTTE.

decisions over counterinsurgency. Therefore, the second hypothesis suggests that India's supportive stance, unlike in the past and despite Tamil Nadu pressure, facilitated the Sri Lankan government to continue its successful counterinsurgency operations in 2009.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides a summary and a critique of the literature on insurgency and counterinsurgency strategies because they have been used often to explain the defeat of the LTTE. It also examines historical and current literature on Sri Lanka's political system and insurgency. By doing this, this thesis points to some important gaps in studies about why the LTTE insurgency ended. I have used three types of literature. First, the literature on the counterinsurgency theories that are relevant to the Sri Lankan case; second, literature on the Sri Lankan counterinsurgency and counterterrorism effort covering the period from the 1970s to 2009; and finally, literature on the aftermath of the post-9/11 "war on terror." This review demonstrates that the existing literature is not sufficient in explaining the LTTE's defeat and determines which gaps needed to be filled in order to properly explain this historic event.

1. Counterinsurgency Theories

It is important to understand this lens of analysis because these theories have been applied to counterinsurgency in Sri Lanka. Several scholars argue that these strategies will work given certain contexts. In Sri Lanka, however, they were applied repeatedly, but did not work initially. Eventually, the insurgency did end in 2009. What changed? It is important to review this. The counterinsurgency theories mentioned in the U.S. Army Field Manual FM 100-20, *Military Operation in Low Intensity Conflicts*, and Field Manual FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*,¹⁶ were applied in the Sri Lankan case. Similarly, Bruce Hoffman and Jennifer Morrison Taw's book, *A Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Insurgency*,¹⁷ also discusses the counterinsurgency strategies

¹⁶ Departments of the Army and Air Force, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflicts* (FM 100-20, AFP 3-20) (Washington, DC: Departments of the Army and the Air Force, 1990), Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency* (FM 3-24, MCWP 3-33.5) (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006)

¹⁷ Bruce Hoffman and Jennifer Morrison Taw, *A Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Insurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1992), <http://www.rand.org/pubs/notes/N3506>.

adopted in many countries of the world, which are equally applicable for Sri Lanka, as they were used there as well.

The U.S. Army Field Manual FM 100-20 identifies insurgency and counterinsurgency as two aspects of the same process. It describes an insurgency as a process in which insurgents are focused on radical change in political control through extensive use of covert instruments and methods.¹⁸ Therefore, counterinsurgency refers to “all military and other actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”¹⁹ Based on the internal defense and development (IDAD) strategy, four principles of counterinsurgency are discussed in the U.S. Army Field Manual FM 100-20. First, “unity of effort” refers to coordinated action and centralized control at all levels. The second is the “maximum use of intelligence” as the basis for all actions. The third is “minimum use of violence” by authorities to maintain order, and the fourth principle is a “responsive government” within which positive measures taken by the leadership are recognized as necessary to mobilize manpower, resources, and to motivate its people.²⁰

According to U.S. Army and Marines Field Manual FM 3-24, political authority plays a critical role in an insurgency. “Counterinsurgency thus involves the controlled application of national power in political, information, economic, social, military, and diplomatic fields and disciplines.”²¹ As per Field Manual FM 3-24, counterinsurgency is “an extremely complex form of warfare.”²² Therefore, it states several successful counterinsurgency operational practices, such as

- emphasize intelligence,
- focus on the population, their needs, and security,
- establish and expand secure areas,
- isolate insurgents from the population (population control),

¹⁸ Departments of the Army and Air Force, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflicts*, 1–24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2–7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-9 – 2-10.

²¹ Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1-1.

²² *Ibid.*

- appoint a single authority, usually a dynamic, charismatic leader,
- conduct effective, pervasive psychological operations,
- provide amnesty and rehabilitation for insurgents,
- place police in the lead with military support,
- expand and diversify the police force,
- train military forces to conduct counterinsurgency operations,
- embed special operations force and advisors with indigenous forces,
- deny the insurgents sanctuary.²³

As pointed out by Bruce Hoffman and Jennifer Morrison Taw, every nation needs a counterinsurgency plan.²⁴ After reviewing the counterinsurgency campaigns in Europe, Asia, and Africa, Hoffman and Taw have come up with four fundamentals that any government should include in its counterinsurgency or counterterrorism national plan irrespective of geographic regions, times, and political systems. First, “an effective overall command and coordination structure;” second, “confidence-building or ‘legitimizing’ measures and anti-terrorist legislation developed to weaken the terrorists while strengthening public support for the government;” third, “coordination within and between intelligence services;” and finally, “foreign collaboration amongst governments and security forces.”²⁵

Since 1980, successive governments of Sri Lanka have applied the theories and principles of counterinsurgency discussed in the U.S. Army Field Manual FM 100-20, U.S. Army and Marines Field Manual FM 3-24, and Hoffman and Taw’s book, *A Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Insurgency*, to the Sri Lankan case, but they could not achieve success until 2009. From 1977 to 2006, successive governments of Sri Lanka, led by four presidents (J. R. Jayewardene, R. Premadasa, D. B. Wijetunge, and C. B. Kumaratunga), applied both “hard” and “soft” aspects of

²³ Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1-24.

²⁴ Hoffman, *Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism*, 3.

²⁵ Ibid.

counterterrorism²⁶ but could not achieve victory over the LTTE. Therefore, this thesis explores why the theories did not work in a certain timeframe but did work in another in the context of countering terrorism and insurgency in Sri Lanka.

2. Sri Lanka's Political System and Insurgency

Case studies by Robert J. Art, Louise Richardson, and Ahmed S. Hashim provide insight about why the Sri Lankan counterinsurgency did not work until 2009. Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson, in their book, *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past*, discuss the Sri Lankan state response to the LTTE insurgency.²⁷ According to them, by 1983, the Sri Lankan military had struggled to face the escalating violence; therefore, the government was not in a position to conduct counterinsurgency.²⁸ Security forces and the police were weak institutions that were poorly trained. They lacked both resources and combat experience. After July 1983, the military deployed in the north of the country had to face intense violence. Furthermore, the government had failed to win the “hearts and minds” of the population.²⁹ Art and Richardson state that, by the end of 1984, “the security forces had increased in size and quality of weaponry, but a national concept of operation was lacking.”³⁰ Furthermore, the Sri Lankan government had sought the support of the United Kingdom and Israel to enhance its military capabilities to face counterinsurgency. However, the increased attacks on civilians by the insurgents created a “state of serious disorder.”³¹ In 1984, President Jayewardene initiated actions to establish the Joint Operation Center (JOC) to coordinate the armed forces and the counterinsurgency operations. However, movement toward a political solution was lacking due to political outbidding. Thus, the entire country was under insurgent threat.³²

²⁶ Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson, *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 486–489.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 495–501.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 495.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 496–497.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 497.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 499.

³² *Ibid.*, 500.

The study by Art and Richardson provides better understanding about the strengths and weakness of the political and military actions of successive governments; however, their findings do not explain how the changing international environment effected the government's action. While the United States and other external actors are mentioned, why are they so important for understanding the continuation and ending of an insurgency? This thesis also examines the role of the external players is an important condition for effecting change.

After analyzing the entire counterinsurgency and counterterrorism campaign in Sri Lanka, Ahmed S. Hashim published a book titled *When Counterinsurgency Wins*.³³ According to Hashim, dynamics of political, military, and diplomatic factors led the Sri Lankan government to the remarkable victory in 2009.³⁴ Analyzing the reasons for previous failures, Hashim states that the "GoSL [government of Sri Lanka] was never able to implement military effectiveness across the board, from political and strategic to operational and tactical levels; nor was military effectiveness extensively embedded in the Armed forces."³⁵ Therefore, these weaknesses significantly caused the failures in government efforts in Eelam Wars I–III (1983–2006).³⁶ As Hashim says, from the very beginning, the conflict in Sri Lanka has been marked as distinctive because their political process continued while fighting. Indian assistance for the LTTE was obvious during the period of President Jayewardene, where Eelam War I (1983–1989) occurred.³⁷ Hashim explains that, during Eelam War II (1990–1994), the LTTE was successful in organizing its military capabilities to reach conventional levels. Dramatic assassinations of high profile political figures by the LTTE characterized this phase of the war with terror.³⁸ To force the LTTE to the "negotiation table," President Kumaratunga's government commenced military offensives that resulted in heavy losses to both the parties during

³³ Ahmed S. Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of Tamil Tigers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

Eelam War III (1995–2000).³⁹ According to Hashim, this situation changed in Eelam War IV (2006–2009). The changes implemented by the government of Sri Lanka and the military during Eelam War IV “proved to be the catalyst that took the Sri Lankan military from victory to victory.”⁴⁰ Hashim highlights political will, regional and international engagement, mobilization and involvement of the population, and operational and tactical restructuring of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces as the four key elements that facilitated the victory.⁴¹ As Art and Richardson do, Hashim’s study also provides an objective analysis on the Sri Lankan case. It gives a better understanding about the political and military situations of successive governments that dealt with the insurgency and terrorism in the island. Hashim identifies regional and international engagement as one of the key elements for the government’s success in 2009, but cannot explain much about the events that took place in the international arena other than the defense cooperation by the government to acquire arms and ammunitions.

The change in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency policies of many powerful nations and international organizations contributed to enforce many restrictions on terrorism and its related activities worldwide. Therefore, due to this changing environment after 2001, international terrorism and insurgency were in decline. Hence, the government of Sri Lanka was able to exploit this changing situation to strengthen its counterinsurgency mechanism while the LTTE was not in a position to sustain its capabilities. In order to show this, this thesis examines important literature on the “war on terror” at the global level, such as, *The War on Terror* by the Council on Foreign Relations,⁴² *The Five Front War*,⁴³ and *The British War on Terror*.⁴⁴ This literature expands our understanding of the important roles of players and conditions around insurgencies.

³⁹ Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins*, 101–102.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 180–189.

⁴² Council on Foreign Relations, *The War On Terror* (New York: Foreign Affairs/Council on Foreign Relations, 2003).

⁴³ Daniel Byman, *The Five Front War* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2008).

⁴⁴ Steve Hewitt, *British War on Terror* (London: Cromwell Press, 2008).

3. What Went Wrong with the LTTE

It is important to understand the LTTE leadership, its capabilities, and the reasons for their failure since the leadership strongly influenced the strategy of the LTTE. Rex A. Hudson argued that “the mindset of a terrorist group reflects the personality and ideology of its top leader.”⁴⁵ According to some researchers, the leader of the organization, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was a “megalomaniac.”⁴⁶ The explanations in former child soldier Niromi de Soyza’s book, *Tamil Tigers: My Story as a Child Soldier in Sri Lanka’s Bloody civil war* also proved the fact that Prabhakaran was a megalomaniac ruthless killer.⁴⁷ According to C. Christine Fair, the LTTE was not the first to introduce “suicide terrorism” to the world; however, when analyzing the suicide attacks carried out by various militant groups during the period from 1980 to 2000, the number of suicide attacks by the LTTE placed them on the top of the list, being responsible for 168 such attacks.⁴⁸ The writings of Hudson, de Soyza, and Fair provide better awareness about the character of the LTTE leadership, which helps to analyze the survival of the LTTE organization and its leadership for thirty years.

Two books by M. R. Narayan Swamy—*Tiger Vanquished: LTTE’s Story and Inside an Elusive Mind: Prabhakaran: The First Profile of the World’s Most Ruthless Guerrilla Leader*⁴⁹—discuss the entire counterinsurgency campaign in Sri Lanka and the reasons why the LTTE failed in 2009. Swamy has pointed out “five major factors that contributed to the eventual and complete destruction of the LTTE, which itself was responsible for four of these.”⁵⁰ The first was the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Second was the LTTE’s decision to pull out from the 2003 peace

⁴⁵ Rex A. Hudson, *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1999), 64, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/>.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁷ Niromi de Soyza, *Tamil Tigers: My Story as a Child Soldier in Sri Lanka’s Bloody civil war* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2011), 301.

⁴⁸ C. Christine Fair, *Urban Battle Fields of South Asia: Lesson Learned from Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004), 40–41.

⁴⁹ M. R. Narayan Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished: LTTE’s Story* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2010), M. R. Narayan Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind: Prabhakaran: The First Profile of the World’s Most Ruthless Guerrilla Leader*, 6th ed. (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2008).

⁵⁰ Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, 179.

process, which annoyed the international community. The third factor was the split among the LTTE. Fourth was the actions by Tamils to boycott the presidential election of 2005 under pressure of the LTTE that paved the way to elect Mahinda Rajapaksa as the president. A high level of cooperation among the institutions under President Mahinda Rajapaksa's government was the fifth factor.⁵¹ As a journalist, Narayan Swamy was writing about the Sri Lanka issue since the 1980s. Hence, his conclusions provide comprehensive information on the LTTE's actions that is important for this research. However, Swamy's books lack information about the effects of the global "war on terror" on the LTTE.

Hashim, too, analyzes the reasons for the LTTE's defeat in 2009. He points out that "The LTTE defeat is a classic example of the implosion of an insurgent organization."⁵² He observes serious political and strategic errors, deeply embedded structural problems, and decline in military strength and operational capabilities—due to the change in international setting as Chapter II shows—as the major factors that led to the defeat of the LTTE.⁵³ Hashim's findings are quite different from Swamy's, but he, too, does not discuss the effects of the changing international environment on the LTTE.

According to Audrey Kurth Cronin, terrorist campaigns may drag on for decades but they always come to an end.⁵⁴ In her book, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, Cronin identifies six patterns to end forms of terrorism: "decapitation, negotiations, success, failure, repression, and reorientation."⁵⁵ Knowledge about the distinctive role of a terrorist leader may lead to capturing or killing him. This refers to decapitation. Understanding the reasons why governments and terrorists negotiate can result in the entry of terrorist groups to legitimate political processes.⁵⁶ Achieving the aim of the terrorist group may lead to

⁵¹ Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, 179.

⁵² Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins*, 190.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid., v–vii.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 10.

“success,” whereas collapse or loss of public support leads to “failure.”⁵⁷ “Repression” refers to the military actions and use of force by governments to defeat and eliminate terrorists groups.⁵⁸ “Reorientation” is a process in which terrorist groups convert from terrorism to other forms of violence.⁵⁹

Cronin’s book—published in 2009, the same year the LTTE was completely defeated, including decapitation of its leader—discusses Sri Lanka as an important case study “because of the LTTE’s extensive and notorious use of terrorist tactics, especially suicide attacks...it is also a case that was strongly affected by the international counterterrorism initiatives put in place after 2001.”⁶⁰ According to Cronin, several peace negotiation attempts between the government and the LTTE have not ended the terrorist violence; instead, unsuccessful negotiations finally made both parties stronger militarily, but weak politically.⁶¹ When analyzing the change in the world order after 9/11, she only discusses the Sri Lankan government’s action to improve the training of its military and improve the capacity to fight the counterinsurgency war.⁶² What is missing is the larger context of changes in global financing and setting. However, Cronin’s book fulfills the theoretical aspects to understand how insurgency ends, which are important to understanding the end of the LTTE.

4. Foreign Collaboration in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency

The purpose of this section is to discuss the literature on effects of changes in the international environment on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. The literature shows that it was impossible for the LTTE to survive nearly thirty years without external assistance, especially in an island nation like Sri Lanka. Hoffman and Taw emphasize the importance of external cooperation amongst governments and security forces to fight against terrorism or insurgency. They explain, “Foreign collaboration and

⁵⁷ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 10–11.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 57–58.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 61–62.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 62.

counterinsurgency campaigns are capricious, depending completely on the individual political and economic interests of the countries involved.”⁶³ Analyzing the Sri Lankan case, Art and Richardson touched upon foreign collaboration factors but failed to cover a broader international spectrum. They discussed how India’s political stance changed in the Sri Lankan issue after the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in October 1984. They also highlight India’s decision to curtail covert assistance, intervene in the Sri Lankan counterinsurgency operations in the north, and send in Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) from July 1987 to March 1990.⁶⁴ Hashim also discusses regional and international engagement. He emphasizes the Sri Lankan diplomatic initiatives in countering transnational activities of the LTTE. He also discusses how the government of Sri Lanka got help from China while “the West was unwilling to do so due to humanitarian concerns; India was reluctant because of its domestic situation.”⁶⁵

Change in international opinion on insurgency and terrorism after 9/11 strengthened cooperation among countries combatting terrorism. Art and Richardson as well as Hashim, discuss the impact of external support on the counterinsurgency victory in Sri Lanka, but could not explain how the changing environment of the world, especially after 2001, influenced the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. The aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States and the U.S.-led “war on terror” has changed the world’s viewpoint on accommodating insurgency and terrorism. Thus, it had an impact on counterterrorism in Sri Lanka. On September 12, 2001, the day after the most brutal terrorist attack took place, “the United Nations [UN] Security Council passed Resolution 1386 (2001),”⁶⁶ in which the council condemned the attack as a “threat to international peace and security and expressed its readiness to combat all forms of terrorism.”⁶⁷ Other international organizations, too, outlined various recommendations to

⁶³ Hoffman, *Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism*, 127.

⁶⁴ Art, *Democracy and Counterterrorism*, 501–506.

⁶⁵ Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins*, 184.

⁶⁶ Woolsey, *Combatting Terrorism*, 375.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

face the “growing threats of terrorism.”⁶⁸ While having an advantageous position over the Sri Lankan military, the LTTE’s unilaterally declared ceasefire in December 2001 portrays the number of changes in the global and domestic environment that “affected both coerced and willing LTTE contributors.”⁶⁹ Hence, I observed a gap in the literature explaining the effect of the change in conditions in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. In order to increase our understanding, I show that the counterinsurgency efforts worked better after the external conditions changed.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

In order to understand how the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts worked more effectively after the external conditions changed, this thesis questions why the counterinsurgency strategies failed previously and then succeeded later in Sri Lanka. Therefore, Chapter I, the introductory chapter, encompasses the research question, research design, hypothetical argument, and a literature review. Chapter II discusses the background to the insurgency, evolution of the LTTE as prominent terrorist organization, and the Sri Lankan counterinsurgency efforts prior to 2001 and after 2001 up to 2009. Chapter III discusses and analyzes the pre-2001 and post-2001 regional and international setting and its impact on counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and specifically, the implications for Sri Lanka. Finally, Chapter IV provides a summary analysis and thoughts on future implications of counterinsurgency strategies.

⁶⁸ Woolsey, *Combatting Terrorism*, 375–376.

⁶⁹ Fair, *Urban Battle Fields of South Asia*, 65–66.

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II. BACKGROUND TO THE INSURGENCY, EVOLUTION OF THE LTTE, AND THE SRI LANKAN COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORTS

A. INTRODUCTION

Background information about the insurgency movement and the evolution of the LTTE as a prominent terrorist organization are both necessary in order to understand how the changing world order has influenced the country's domestic politics. First, a history of the insurgency movement provides the reader with an understanding of why an ethnic conflict emerged in Sri Lanka after its independence in 1948. It also gives the reader a better understanding of how the majority Sinhalese government's actions created discontent among minority Tamils, what motivated these actions, and what external forces aggravated the conflict. Second, this chapter explains how the LTTE was the only insurgent group of several Tamil groups that evolved into a lethal terrorist organization that then waged a protracted war against the central government. Finally, this chapter covers the Sri Lankan counterinsurgency efforts prior to 2001 and after 2001 up to 2009—two distinct periods marked by the September 11 attacks in New York that reshaped the ways in which the world dealt with terrorism. The findings show that the universally-accepted counterinsurgency methods adopted by the Sri Lankan government prior to 2001 closely mirrored the counterinsurgency methods adopted after 2001 until the insurgency and terrorism ended in 2009, raising the question of what changed. The purpose of this chapter is to lay the foundation for this thesis.

B. POLITICS AND THE EMERGENCE OF TAMIL INSURGENCY

After Sri Lankan independence in 1948, malpractices in political, social, and economic arenas led the island into a volatile situation that culminated in a full-fledged civil war in the 1980s. The British colonial administration from 1815 to 1948 embraced a centralized and unified form of governing system on the island, which laid the foundation for neglect of the regions in Sri Lanka. According to Neil De Votta, "Britain's colonial policies and practices helped create fissures, especially between the majority Sinhala and

minority Tamils.”⁷⁰ Prior to 1948, the bureaucracy in Colombo made policy decisions on development and allocation of resources for provinces and districts without consulting the respective regional authorities. This centralized control and decision-making process led to an unequal distribution of resources and an imbalance in development among the administrative districts. After independence, policy makers and bureaucrats did not take any steps to decentralize these powers, thus allowing their practices to continue.⁷¹ After 1948, the ongoing prejudicial and ineffective policy decisions made by successive governments resulted in further tensions between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, which eventually erupted into violence.

From 1948 to 1994, two main political parties decided the development policies in Sri Lanka: the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). The UNP was in power during the periods of 1949–1956, 1965–1970, and 1977–1994. The country was under the SLFP during the periods of 1956–1959, 1960–1965, and 1970–1977. Describing the characteristics of the two main political parties, the economist Sirimal Abeyratne notes:

The UNP is known to be center-right political party, of which the ideological position has favored a market-friendly policy environment, allowing greater room for the function of the private sector...The SLFP emerged as a Centre-left party favoring regulated and state-dominated economy, and constituted the main alternative to the UNP. Political and economic thinking of the SLFP has also been influenced to a greater extent by the socialist ideology.⁷²

Many Tamils considered some of the constitutional legislation passed by the successive governments as discriminatory towards the minorities. In particular, the following legislative acts contributed significantly to tensions between the communities:

- The Ceylon Citizenship Act No. 18 of 1948: Denied citizenship for Tamils of Indian origin.

⁷⁰ Neil De Votta, *Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalist Ideology: Implication for Politics and Conflict Resolution in Sri Lanka* (Washington, DC: East-West Center, 2007), 70.

⁷¹ Chelvadurai Manogran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 149–150.

⁷² Sirimal Abeyratne, “Economic Roots of Political Conflict: The Case of Sri Lanka,” *The World Economy* 27, no. 8, (August 2004): 1303, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=597015>.

- Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956: Designated Sinhala as the official language.
- Constitution of 1972: Disengaged from the British Commonwealth and created republic of Sri Lanka as an independent unitary state. Buddhism was recognized as the national religion.
- Standardization Act of 1973: Give higher education priority, in the form of university selections, to Sinhalese students.
- Constitution of 1978: Established an executive presidential-type government.
- Prevention of Terrorism Act No. 48 of 1979: Abrogated all legal and constitutional safeguards concerning arrest and proscribed all Tamil nationalist movements.
- Sixth Amendment to the Constitution in 1983: Required all members of parliament to take an oath renounce separation.⁷³

In discussing the Sri Lankan conflict, Chelvadurai Manogran concludes, “The policy of discrimination against the Tamil community fostered by Sinhala-dominated governments has reduced the minority to an oppressed group.”⁷⁴

By 1948, the Federal Party, later known as Tamil Arasu Kachchi, led by S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, was at the forefront of the demands calling for the decentralization of administration for Tamils, but without a clear mandate. However, later in 1956, having won ten parliamentary seats at the general election, the Federal party was in a stronger position to protest against the Sinhala Only Act—the Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956 implemented by the Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike’s SLFP government. Tamils considered this official language act discriminatory and a denial of their language rights. Instead of demanding decentralized administration, the Federal party started to advocate for a separate Tamil linguistic state.

Under the British administration, Tamils with good English language skills were offered higher positions in the government. Tamils wanted to be able to educate their

⁷³ Yamuna Sangarasivam, “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Cultural Production of Nationalism and Violence: Representing the Integrity of Nation and the Choice for Armed Struggle” (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 2000), 7–8.

⁷⁴ Manogran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, 2.

children in their native language and interacted with the government and general society using their own language. But to their disappointment, Sinhala was made the only official language of independent Sri Lanka. By 1958, learning Sinhala was a prerequisite for Tamils to secure employment in the government, Tamils voiced their disagreement through peaceful demonstrations against the government. These non-violent protests were confronted by Sinhalese mobs, which ignited the anti-Tamil ethnic riots in 1956.⁷⁵

The Tamils demanded that the administration create federal policies designed especially to safeguard their job opportunities in Tamil majority districts. However, Sinhala extremists protested against this because they believed that it would lead to complete independence. On the one hand, the “federalists did not demand political independence but they had wanted some measures of economic independence.”⁷⁶ On the other hand, both Tamil and Sinhala politicians did not make a serious effort to educate their communities about the regional autonomy and power-sharing at the provincial level within which the power was mainly limited to the activities involving regional and rural development. Due to political outbidding between the main political parties, the Sinhala politicians hindered the government from granting franchises to the Tamils. The term outbidding refers “to the location of party positions on a given dimension. Outbidding occurs when parties assume positions toward the endpoints on this dimension.”⁷⁷ This outbidding jeopardized one of the most significant political solutions offered to resolve the problem, the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957.⁷⁸

By 1957, Prime Minister Bandaranaike and Federal party leader S. J. V. Chelvanayakam had come to an agreement with the aim to solve the ethnic problem. The agreement signed on 26 July 1957 addressed three major concerns. First, the state agreed to acknowledge the official status of the “Tamil language for administrative purposes in

⁷⁵ Sangarasivam, *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam*, 11.

⁷⁶ Manogran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, 151.

⁷⁷ Kanchan Chandra, “Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability,” *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no 2, (2005): 236, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1537592705050188>.

⁷⁸ Manogran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, 153.

the Northern and Eastern provinces.”⁷⁹ Second, it agreed to modify the draft Regional Councils Bill to accommodate some demands of the Federal Party. Third, Prime Minister Bandaranaike “agreed to place limits on the settlement of Sinhalese ‘colonists’ in irrigation schemes in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, so that the indigenous Tamils could maintain their majority positions in those areas.”⁸⁰ Soon after independence, the first Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake and his UNP government commenced colonization in the dry zone under the Gal Oya project. This caused drastic changes to the demography in that region.⁸¹ Writing on the Tamil’s perspective on this issue, Manogran says, “Tamils considered the colonization issue to be the most serious of the problems facing them.”⁸² As traditional farmers, Tamils feared losing their agricultural lands. The political pressure from extremists in his own party and the political pressure of the UNP forced Bandaranaike to repeal the pact. Therefore, except for the recognition of official status for the Tamil language (Tamil Language [Special Provision] Act No. 28), the other two issues agreed upon were abrogated.⁸³ The abolition of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam agreement shaped the second wave of ethnic riots in 1958.

Except for granting official status for the Tamil language for administrative purposes, from 1960 to 1977, no significant progress was made in the government towards resolving the grievances of Tamils. By the mid-1970s, “the Tamils had lost confidence in the ability of the Sinhala government to redress their grievances.”⁸⁴ On 14 May 1976, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) issued its manifesto (Vaddukodai Resolution), which demanded the establishment of a separate state “either by peaceful means or by direct action or struggle.”⁸⁵ By 1978, several Tamil militant groups had

⁷⁹ K. M. de Silva, *Managing Ethnic Tensions in Multi-Ethnic Societies: Sri Lanka 1880–1985* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 186.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 188.

⁸² Manogran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, 155.

⁸³ De Silva, *Managing Ethnic Tensions*, 189.

⁸⁴ Manogran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, 156.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 156.

emerged in northern Sri Lanka to back the Tamils' cause for independence—the Tamil Eelam.

At this time, the propaganda campaigns of the Tamils also spread overseas as a consequence of growing diaspora. C. Christine Fair writes, “The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been a crucial component of the lethality and tenacity of this conflict.”⁸⁶ She further states that of the three waves of Tamil migrations, the second wave of migration began in 1956 when several thousand English-educated Sri Lankan Tamils settled in the UK, Australia, Canada and the United States.⁸⁷ The Tamil diaspora in the United States, mainly in Boston, managed to influence the U.S. authorities. With that influence, the lower house of the Massachusetts legislature adopted a series of resolutions pertinent to the conflict in Sri Lanka. One of the resolutions passed on 09 May 1979 stated that it was “memorializing the President [of the United States] and the Congress to utilize the powers of their offices to rectify the gross injustices which had been inhumanly inflicted on the Tamils of Sri Lanka.”⁸⁸ In addition to the resolutions passed, “the Governor of Massachusetts declared 22 May 1979 ‘Eelam Tamils’ Day’ and handed over a copy of the resolution to M. Sivasitamparam, Amirthalingam’s deputy, and President of the TULF.”⁸⁹

The successive political and economic policies influenced by the shift in the international environment prejudiced the state-building and ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. The spread of economic liberalization across the globe during and after the 1970s promoted new forms of economic, political, and social activities in the domestic setting. As discussed earlier, the UNP was moving more towards market-oriented economic policies and was supported by the business community on the island. The victory in the 1977 parliamentary elections allowed the UNP government to implement the much-

⁸⁶ C. Christine Fair, “The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora: Sustaining Conflict and Pushing for Peace,” in *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-Makers or Peace-Wreckers?*, ed. Hazel Smith and Paul B. Stares. (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007), 174.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁸⁸ K. T. Rajasinham, “Sri Lanka: The Untold Story,” *Asia Times*, February 9, 2002, <http://www.atimes.com/ind-pak/DB09Df02.html>; see also De Silva, *Managing Ethnic Tensions*, 330.

⁸⁹ De Silva, *Managing Ethnic Tensions*, 330.

promised economic reforms, creating economic liberalization and accelerating economic growth on the island. In the face of emerging globalization, Sri Lanka was the first to implement open economic policies in the region, even before India. While experiencing the results of economic liberalization, foreign donor investments allowed the Sri Lankan government to commence massive development projects, such as the *Mahavali* irrigation project that provided much-needed water for farming in the northeastern dry zone. This allowed a significant number of Sinhalese to settle in those Muslim- and Tamil-dominated areas.⁹⁰ In addition, the open economic policy of the UNP government “has devastated the market-oriented farming economy of Tamil districts, especially in the Jaffna peninsula.”⁹¹

Economic liberalization and the development projects caused further escalation of violence. The pro-West policy of Jayewardene’s UNP government antagonized India. According to Gordon Weiss, “India had demonstrated its will and capacity to confront neighboring states in its 1962 border war with China, and had brought about the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 from Pakistan.”⁹² Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who came to power in 1966, had cordial relations with Sri Lanka during Prime Minister Sirimao Bandaranaike’s SLFP government. However, due to the power shift in 1977 where J. R. Jayewardene became the president, Gandhi’s policies towards Sri Lanka also shifted. In addition, the domestic environment for Indira Gandhi changed, as she lost control of constituencies across India after the Emergency Act. The southern state of Tamil Nadu, in particular, saw a rise of anti-Congress political parties. This then shaped indo-Lanka relations for the next twenty years.

The consequences of the “Cold War” indirectly affected the Sri Lankan internal conflict in which India covertly supported the Tamil insurgents in terms of training and provided safe havens on Indian soil. As Narayan Swamy writes, “India’s covert

⁹⁰ Gunnar Sorbo et al., *Pawns of Peace: Evaluation of Norwegian Peace Efforts in Sri Lanka, 1997–2009* (Report 5/2011 – Evaluation) (Oslo, Norway: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation [Norad], September 2011), 21–22.

⁹¹ Manogran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, 137.

⁹² Gordon Weiss, *The Cage: The Fight for Sri Lanka and the Last Days of the Tamil Tigers* (London: Bodley Head, 2011), 55.

involvement in the Sri Lankan Tamil cause dramatically altered the dynamics of the separatist movement.”⁹³ Powered by external support, insurgents began offensive action against the government. The immediate result was the massacre of thirteen military personnel by the insurgents on July 23, 1983, in Jaffna that ultimately ended with the most devastating backlash—in the form of mob violence and ethnic riots among civilians—in Colombo since Sri Lanka’s independence. “In a sense ‘Black July,’ as the massacre came to be known among Tamils, legitimized Tamil chauvinism and militancy like never before.”⁹⁴ Since 1983, until it ended in 2009 with unsuccessful peace attempts, the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka had dragged on for nearly three decades, with increased levels of violence and ruthless terrorism that had caused enormous economic destruction and the demise of thousands of humans.

C. THE LTTE: FUNCTION AND EVOLUTION

The LTTE initially developed as an insurgent organization, but later converted into a full-fledged terrorist organization and fought against the government forces to have a separate country for the Tamils on the island. Since its origin, the strategic vision and the final goal of the organization was to create an independent state for Tamils—Tamil Eelam—covering 28.7 percent of Sri Lanka’s land mass and 60 percent of its coastline.⁹⁵ To achieve its goal, the LTTE was “engaged in an armed struggle of remarkable violence through a sustained campaign of guerrilla tactics, semi conventional military actions and terrorism.”⁹⁶

On May 5, 1976, a 21-year-old named Velupillai Prabhakaran formed the LTTE.⁹⁷ Discussing the leader of the LTTE’s profile, Rex A. Hudson wrote, “After dropping out of school at age 16, he [Prabhakaran] began to associate with Tamil ‘activist

⁹³ Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind*, 94.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁹⁵ Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis: July 2006–May 2009* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka), 5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind*, 36.

gangs.’ On one occasion as a gang member, he participated in a political kidnapping.”⁹⁸ As a youth, Prabhakaran initiated his first act of violence by setting fire to a state-owned public transport bus. Then he established himself as a cold-blooded man by killing “Alfred Duriappa, the mayor of Jaffna” on July 27, 1975.⁹⁹ At the age of 21, Prabhakaran was among the initial members to form a militant group called the Tamil New Tigers (TNT); he became its co-leader.¹⁰⁰ After taking over the control of his gang, Prabhakaran renamed the TNT the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Since then, the LTTE grew to its apex in 2006— by having 25,000 cadres.¹⁰¹

The LTTE organization gradually expanded as a formidable terrorist organization. Describing its expansion, Narayan Swamy wrote, “in the process, the LTTE’s image, as an outfit that cannot be defeated by anyone, only got reinforced, making it the most feared, fanatic and ruthless outlaw, its ability to destroy, next only to Al Qaeda’s.”¹⁰² Apart from the death of thousands of civilians, LTTE was also responsible for the killings of two heads of states, 104 politicians, 1,555 Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) personnel, 23,387 Sri Lankan security forces personnel, and 2,825 missing in action (MIA).¹⁰³ While discussing capabilities of the LTTE, Narayan swami pointed out:

Besides being the only insurgent outfit to own a shipping fleet (after the PLO–Palestine Liberation Organization–and IRA–Irish Republican Army), the LTTE had its own army, a small but lethal naval wing, a nascent air force, artillery units, a fired intelligence wing, a police force, a clandestine radio, and an efficient logistic division to buy and ferry war material from around the world in the most secretive and sophisticated manner. The group’s tentacles reached almost every country. And the LTTE had proved its mettle by repeatedly harassing the Sri Lanka military—and for over two years the much bigger Indian Army too.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Hudson, *Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism*, 96.

⁹⁹ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 58.

¹⁰⁰ Hudson, *Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism*, 96.

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis*, 38.

¹⁰² Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, xvii.

¹⁰³ Udaya Perera, “Defeating Terrorism through a Politico–Military Strategy, the Sri Lankan Experience” (master’s thesis, U.S. Army War College, 2012), 38.

¹⁰⁴ Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, xix.

According to the description provided by Waldmann, the LTTE can be categorized as an ethnic terrorist group. The goal of ethnic terrorism is to achieve “greater autonomy, even independence from the oppressor state.”¹⁰⁵ Prabhakaran asserted that the Tamils had to have a separate state.¹⁰⁶ This ideology of Prabhakaran drew public support and motivated Tamil youths to join the insurgency. The members of the LTTE represented both men and women from the lower or lower middle class. At the initial stage, the average age of most of the members was over 18 years. However, at the latter stage, the LTTE even recruited teenagers. According to Hudson “among the world’s child combatants, children feature most prominently in the LTTE, whose fiercest fighting force, the Leopard Brigade (Sirasu puli), is made up of children (baby brigade).”¹⁰⁷

Hudson argued that the “mindset” of each terrorist group is different in nature. Therefore, “the mindset of a terrorist group reflects the personality and ideology of its top leader.”¹⁰⁸ Some researchers have labeled the leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, as “Asia’s new Pol Pot,” a “ruthless killer,” and a “megalomaniac.”¹⁰⁹ His murders included civilians, both local and foreign high profile politicians, Tamil rivals, and trusted members and commanders of his own organization.¹¹⁰ The brutal execution of his deputy leader, along with 50 other loyal members on December 28, 1994,¹¹¹ proved the fact that Prabhakaran was a megalomaniac and a ruthless killer. Prabhakaran’s psychopathic behavior can be best understood by analyzing his indiscriminate killings of men, women, and children. According to the Sri Lanka Ministry of Defense’s sources, he was responsible for murdering over 1,950 and injuring over 400 civilians in vulnerable

¹⁰⁵ Peter Waldmann, “Ethnic and Socio-Revolutionary Terrorism: A Comparison of Structures,” in *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*, ed. Bert Klandermans and Donatella Della Porta (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1992), 237–245.

¹⁰⁶ Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, lvi.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁰⁸ Hudson, *Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism*, 64.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ De Soyza, *Tamil Tigers: My Story as a Child Soldier*, 301.

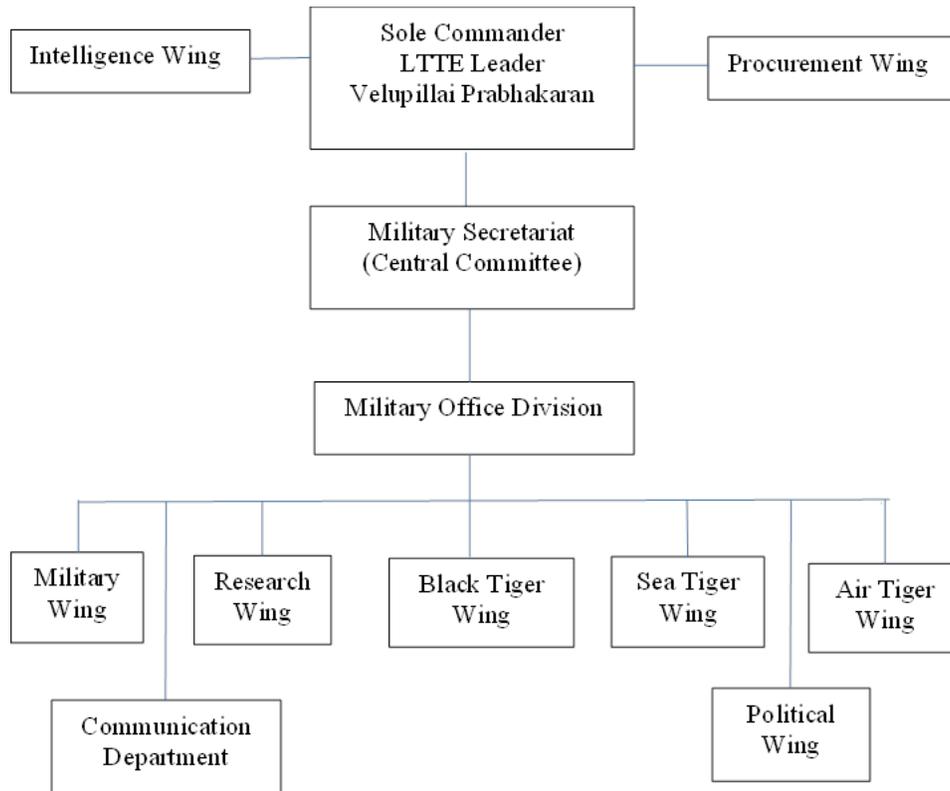
villages and “the worst of these attacks took place at a Muslim village in Eravur, Batticaloa in August 1990, and Killing 173 civilians.”¹¹²

Though terrorism and insurgency are different from each other, insurgents use terrorism as a tool. According to Ahmed S. Hashim, “The LTTE, Hezbollah, the FARC, and Sendero Luminoso in Peru, are functionally specialized non-state actors. They are able to wage terrorism, guerilla warfare, and some form of mobile conventional warfare against their opponents.”¹¹³ To carry out its terrorist acts, the LTTE was organized in to several components with Velupillai Prabhakaran as its leader. The organization’s components included the Intelligence wing, Procurement wing, Military wing, Communication department, Research wing, Black Tiger wing, Sea Tiger wing, Air Tiger wing, and Political wing. The LTTE’s organizational structure is shown in Figure 1.

¹¹² Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis*, 7.

¹¹³ Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins*, 33.

Figure 1. Outline of the LTTE Organization



The increase in external financial assistance for the LTTE helped immensely to strengthen its war-fighting capabilities. The presence of a large diaspora and India’s willingness to support the organization actively until 1986 created a setting for the growth of the LTTE. The Human Rights Watch reported that “By the mid-1990s... 80 to 90 percent of the LTTE’s military budget [came] from overseas sources, including both diaspora contributions and income from international investments and businesses.”¹¹⁴ This large foreign income source helped the LTTE acquire modern weaponry and military hardware such as artillery guns, heavy and medium mortars, anti-aircraft guns, surface-to-surface missiles, surface to air missiles, anti-tank mines, anti-personnel mines, and small arms. Most importantly, by early 1990, the LTTE established its Air Tiger

¹¹⁴ Jo Becker, “Funding the ‘Final War:’ LTTE Intimidation and Extortion in the Tamil Diaspora,” *The Human Rights Watch* 18, no. 1(C) (March 2011): 11.

wing.¹¹⁵ With its air capabilities, the LTTE executed several air strikes in the commercial capital of Colombo, which, in addition to economic devastation, caused deep psychological impact. The LTTE had obtained seven nonmilitary lightweight aircrafts through its front organizations abroad. Those aircrafts were smuggled to Sri Lanka and modified for offensive capabilities. From 1989 to 2009, the LTTE had destroyed 52 aircraft, including commercial aircraft, by using both missiles and ground attacks.¹¹⁶ To gain supremacy over the Sri Lankan Navy, the LTTE developed and maintained a formidable Sea Tiger wing. This wing had the capability “of countering the security forces’ actions through semi-conventional naval tactics and suicide missions.”¹¹⁷ They played an important role when smuggling weapons and military hardware to the island.¹¹⁸

The LTTE had an extensive intelligence network externally and domestically, which helped thwart counterinsurgency efforts by the Sri Lankan government. Separate groups of cadres were involved in gathering information and handling intelligence both locally and overseas. The effective intelligence network of the LTTE contributed to their success in both assassinations and suicide attacks.¹¹⁹ The political wing of the LTTE, headed by the leadership itself, gained its strength during the peace talks and ceasefire agreements, where it had influence over government institutions. “The LTTE used the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) political party as their proxy both in parliament and outside Sri Lanka.”¹²⁰ While the LTTE was unable to approach some states directly, the TNA filled that gap by promoting the separatist ideology of the LTTE internationally through its political and diplomatic channels.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Kamalika Jayathilaka et al., “Defeating Terrorism: The Sri Lankan Experience,” *Business Today*, July 2011, 36.

¹¹⁶ Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis*, 20.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22–23.

¹²⁰ Perera, “Defeating Terrorism through a Politico–Military Strategy,” 35.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

D. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT MECHANISM OF THE LTTE

Comprised of a number of front organizations, the international network of the LTTE had engaged in its propaganda campaign, arms procurement, fundraising, and criminal activities. Prior to the proscription by the international community, the “LTTE front organizations have been set up in 54 locations in 32 countries around the world.”¹²² Front organizations such as the World Tamil Forum (WTF), British Tamil Forum (BTF), and Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) were successful in misleading the international community. These organizations worked diligently to lobby politicians of powerful nations with the aim of gaining support for their cause. At one point, they were successful in enforcing an “unofficial embargo on military equipment being supplied to the Sri Lankan government.”¹²³ Defense sources revealed that the procurement and delivery network of the LTTE operated throughout the world and they established a “fleet of floating warehouses stationed in international waters off Sri Lanka.”¹²⁴ The external environment allowed this to happen. The LTTE “smuggled arms and ammunitions from the far East and Eastern European countries. The bulk of their military hardware had been purchased from North Korea; other military hardware was procured from Ukraine and Bulgaria.”¹²⁵

The LTTE had efficiently used information and diplomacy as tools for their hybrid terrorism. As a hybrid terrorist organization, the LTTE improved its capacities to become a lethal conventional force. Writing about the facets of terrorism and likely prospects Bruce Hoffman points out that the active role played by states in supporting and sponsoring terrorism is one of the main causes for increasing lethality.¹²⁶ The training assistance and other logistical support from India enhanced the striking power and the capabilities of the LTTE during its initial stage.

¹²² Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis*, 26.

¹²³ Perera, “Defeating Terrorism through a Politico–Military Strategy.” 36.

¹²⁴ Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis*, 23.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Bruce Hoffman, “From Terrorism Trends and Prospects,” in *Countering the New Terrorism*, ed. Lan O. Lesser et.al., (Santa Monica: RAND, 1999), 7–15.

External support is an essential factor in the survival of terrorist groups. Without external support, it is difficult for terrorists or insurgents to wage a protracted war against a legitimate government. Without external assistance, it was impossible for the LTTE to survive nearly thirty years, especially in an island nation like Sri Lanka. Analyzing the dimension of transnational support infrastructure and the external activities of the LTTE, Peter Chalk concludes,

The global reach of the LTTE, was widely recognized to be one of the most proficient and dangerous guerrilla / terrorist groups in the world. In large part, this reputation is owed to the extremely sophisticated international network that has been built by the organization.¹²⁷

To disseminate its dogma among the Tamil diaspora in order to raise funds for terrorism, “the LTTE maintained a number of television and radio stations, websites, and printing presses in several European countries which have a significant Tamil Diaspora presence.”¹²⁸

The LTTE effectively used Sri Lankan Tamils residing in North America, Europe, and Asian countries to raise funds for the organization, thus, financing was never an issue. According to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), by the year 2000, “at least eight non-profit organizations and five companies were operating in Canada as fronts for the LTTE.”¹²⁹ At one point, the LTTE had collected 80 percent of its annual operating budget through the Tamil diaspora. By 2007, this fund had reached “an output of 200–300 million USD.”¹³⁰ Other than through the diaspora, the LTTE raised funds through both legal and illegal businesses like “international shipping, arms smuggling, human trafficking and other businesses.”¹³¹

¹²⁷ Peter Chalk, *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam’s (LTTE) International Organization and Operations – A Preliminary Analysis* (Commentary No. 77) (Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Security Intelligence Service, March 17, 2000), xx, <http://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/com77e.htm>.

¹²⁸ Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis*, 26.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Becker, “Funding the ‘Final war,’” 11.

¹³⁰ Stephen L. Battle, “Lessons in Legitimacy: The LTTE End-Game of 2007–2009” (Master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010), 25.

¹³¹ Perera, “Defeating Terrorism through a Politico–Military Strategy,” 37.

E. SUICIDE TERRORISM AND THE LTTE

Two horrific incidences in the history of suicide terrorism affected the survival of the LTTE. First, the regional stance on the separatist movement in Sri Lanka changed after the killing of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by LTTE suicide attack. Second, the international opinion on terrorism changed after al-Qaeda's suicide attacks on September 11, 2001. The LTTE was not the first to introduce suicide terrorism to the world. However, when analyzing the suicide attacks carried out by various militant groups throughout the world, the number of suicide attacks by the LTTE placed it at the top of the list, the organization having been responsible for 168 such attacks during the period from 1980 to 2000.¹³² The pervasiveness of suicide terrorism during the last decades has formed a vital part of several terrorist campaigns. Since the first suicide attack carried out in Lebanon by Hizballah in 1983, several other terrorist groups in the world have adopted this method. Fair pointed out that "Prabhakaran made a strategic decision to adopt the method of suicide attack after observing its lethal effectiveness in the 1983 suicide bombing of the U.S. and French barracks in Beirut."¹³³ As highlighted by Amy Waldman, "suicide has long been part of the Tiger culture"¹³⁴ and "the entire LTTE could arguably be declared a suicide force of sorts."¹³⁵ All the members had cyanide capsules and they have shown little hesitation in consuming it, if captured. The LTTE started suicide terrorism by killing 40 security personnel when a truck full of explosives rammed into an army camp on July 5, 1987.¹³⁶ Since that time, until November 20, 2008, 378 suicide bombers of the LTTE (274 male and 104 female) died in action.¹³⁷ The LTTE was the first to use a suicide body suit in South Asia. A female LTTE suicide bomber, wearing a suicide body suit, assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India in May, 1991. The LTTE also established a naval form of suicide attacks on vessels by

¹³² Fair, *Urban Battle Fields of South Asia*, 40–41.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹³⁴ Amy Waldman, "Masters of Suicide Bombing: Tamil Guerrillas of Sri Lanka," *The New York Times*, January 14, 2003.

¹³⁵ Fair, *Urban Battle Fields of South Asia*, 47.

¹³⁶ Waldman, "Masters of Suicide Bombing.."

¹³⁷ Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis*, 22.

using explosive-laden small boats. The al-Qaeda attack on the American destroyer U.S.S. *Cole* in 2000, which used a small boat full of explosives, “had been almost identical to the Tiger (LTTE) attack on a Sri Lankan naval ship in 1991.”¹³⁸

F. END OF THE LTTE

Cronin identifies six ways to counteract and end forms of terrorism: “decapitation, negotiations, success, failure, repression, and reorientation.”¹³⁹ She further insists that “The only way that the United States and its allies can effectively respond to twenty-first-century terrorism is to formulate their policy with an understanding of how terrorist campaigns end and then to follow a plan based on that understanding.”¹⁴⁰ Numerous peace negotiation attempts between two parties had not ended the terrorist violence in Sri Lanka; instead, unsuccessful negotiations ultimately made both parties stronger militarily, but weaker politically. Yet, with thirty years of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism experience, the Sri Lankan security forces had become battle-hardened by the latter stage of the fight. They were finally able to defeat the terrorist organizations in Sri Lanka. Analyzing the LTTE defeat, Ahmed S. Hashim concludes that “the LTTE defeat is a classic example of the implosion of an insurgent organization...the LTTE made serious political and strategic errors.”¹⁴¹ Those errors include, first, that the LTTE had failed to understand the consequences of the U.S.-led “war on terror” after 9/11 that made changes in international policies on counterterrorism. Second, the LTTE made the decision to pull out from 2003 and 2006 peace processes and initiated a fight that they could not win. Finally, “the LTTE failed [to] effectively integrate its methods of terrorism, guerrilla war, and quasi-conventional war. Insurgent organizations traditionally have this problem.”¹⁴²

What facilitated the LTTE’s survival for 30 years? Was it the result of the favorable external conditions they enjoyed or other factors? Both extensive external

¹³⁸ Waldman, “Masters of Suicide Bombing;” see also Fair, *Urban Battle Fields of South Asia*, 39.

¹³⁹ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, v–vii.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴¹ Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins*, 190.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 192–194.

support and developed effective methods of fighting enabled the LTTE to survive for nearly 30 years. They improved some weapon systems. For example, they invented a mortar named “Pasiln 2000,” a mortar like the 122 mm canon.¹⁴³ They also invented a suicide waist for suicide bombers. Although the LTTE had not been able to achieve its end goal of a separate state, they were successful in their way of surviving for more than 30 years. As suggested in her organizational approach, Martha Crenshaw explains that “terrorist groups are strengthened or weakened as much from their own international dynamics as from government counteractions. ‘Winning’ in a conventional sense may not be the actual goal of terrorists... The reward is in playing the game.”¹⁴⁴

G. THE SRI LANKAN COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORTS

Since 1980, Sri Lanka applied the universally accepted theories and principles of counterinsurgency to defeat insurgency and terrorism on the island but could not achieve success until 2009. Since 1977, successive governments of Sri Lanka led by three presidents—J. R. Jayewardene, R. Premadasa, and C. B. Kumaratunga—applied both “hard” and “soft” aspects of counterterrorism,¹⁴⁵ but could not defeat the LTTE. Finally, the government under President Mahinda Rajapaksa succeeded in defeating terrorism on the island in 2009. Previously, the Sri Lankan governments repeatedly applied similar strategies, but they did not work initially. Eventually, the insurgency did end in 2009. What changed? Why did they not work in a certain period and work in another context? The impact of changing international factors after 2001 facilitated defeating insurgency and terrorism on the island.

Providing some insight into why the Sri Lankan counterinsurgency did not work until 2009, Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson explain that by 1983, the Sri Lankan military had struggled to face the escalating violence; therefore, the government was not in a position to conduct counterinsurgency. Their security forces and police were weak institutions and poorly trained. They lacked both resources and combat experience. After

¹⁴³ “Pasilan 2000,” DefenceWire, February 7, 2008, <http://defencewire.blogspot.com/2008/02/pasilan-2000.htm>.

¹⁴⁴ Martha Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism*, (London: Routledge, 2014), 87.

¹⁴⁵ Art, *Democracy and Counterterrorism*, 486–489.

July 1983, the military deployed in the north of the country had to face intense violence. Furthermore, the government had failed to win the “hearts and minds” of the people. Art and Richardson state that, by the end of 1984, “the security forces had increased in size and quality of weaponry, but a national concept of operation was lacking.”¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, the Sri Lankan government had sought the support of the United Kingdom and Israel to enhance its military capabilities to face insurgency. However, the increased attacks on civilians by the insurgents created a “state of serious disorder.”¹⁴⁷ Though President Jayewardene initiated actions to establish the Joint Operation Center (JOC) to coordinate the armed forces and the counterinsurgency operations in 1984, movement toward a political solution was lacking due to political outbidding. The major political parties had taken varying stances on the ethnic issue when they were in and out of power. Thus, the entire country was under insurgent threat.¹⁴⁸

During the Cold War in the 1980s, the changing international environment and the role of India badly affected the Sri Lankan government’s actions on fighting the insurgency. Indian assistance for the LTTE was obvious during the period of President Jayewardene, when Eelam War I (1983–1989) occurred.¹⁴⁹ While the Sri Lankan military was actively hunting Prabhakaran and the government was waiting to give Sri Lankan Rupees 300,000 for his head, on May 19, 1982, Indian police arrested Prabhakaran while he was hiding in Tamil Nadu. Unfortunately, the extradition request by the Sri Lankan government was turned down; instead,

Unknown to the world, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi opened up a channel to Prabhakaran, through the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India’s external intelligence agency. After keeping him in house arrest for seven months, Indians let him free. Prabhakaran returned to Sri Lanka in early 1983 where he continued fighting.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Art, *Democracy and Counterterrorism*, 495–497.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 499.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 500.

¹⁴⁹ Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins*, 88.

¹⁵⁰ Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind*, 67–75.

Jayewardene's government launched its counterinsurgency campaign in the Jaffna peninsula—Operation Liberation—in May 1987. When troops were about to capture the top leader of the LTTE, India dictatorially called for a halt to the offensive. Indian Air Force transport planes escorted by fighter jets violated the Sri Lankan airspace and dropped 25 tons of relief materials. India saved Prabhakaran for the second time. Due to extensive diplomatic pressure from India, President Jayewardene had to accept a ceasefire agreement, and he signed the Indo-Lanka peace accord “under which the GoSL agreed to devolve powers to the provinces and acknowledge Tamil as an official language; the Sri Lankan military would withdraw to barracks, and the... LTTE... would surrender their arms.”¹⁵¹ The Indian Peacekeeping Forces (IPKF) deployed in the north and the east of the island in July 1987. The LTTE neither surrendered its weapons nor cooperated with the implementations of the peace accord, but rather, engaged in fierce battles with the IPKF.

The change of political leadership in both India and Sri Lanka thwarted the IPKF's role. Ranasinghe Premadasa succeeded President Jayewardene in January 1989. Rajiv Gandhi, the main power behind the Indo-Lanka peace agreement, lost his premiership in December 1989. With the strong protest against the IPKF by Premadasa's government, India was compelled to withdraw its troops from Sri Lanka in March 1990. “The IPKF withdrew in fury after heavy losses, but not before roughing up, killing, looting and raping the Tamils who came within reach.”¹⁵²

During the Eelam War II from 1990 to 1994, the LTTE was successful in organizing its military capabilities to reach conventional levels. Dramatic assassinations of high profile political figures by the LTTE characterized this phase of the war with terror.¹⁵³ The LTTE commenced this phase of war by attacking twelve police stations and killing 600 police officers who had been surrounded. In addition, hundreds of Sinhala and Muslim civilians were also massacred. A suicide bomber killed Sri Lankan defense Minister Ranjan Wijeratne in March 1991. On May 21 of the same year, Rajiv Gandhi

¹⁵¹ Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind*, 154; see also, Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins*, 94.

¹⁵² Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins*, 98.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 99.

was assassinated on Indian soil by an LTTE suicide bomber. In May 1993, an LTTE suicide bomber assassinated president Premadasa. While security forces engaged in limited offensives, the LTTE attacked the government naval base at Pooneryn in November 1993. All of Sri Lanka was on the verge of collapse. “The spiraling descent into violence and terrorism throughout the country gave the government the excuse to implement and maintain a state of emergency.”¹⁵⁴

To force the LTTE to the negotiation table, President Kumaratunga’s government continued the counterinsurgency campaign that resulted in heavy losses to both parties during the Eelam War III from 1995 to 2002. After winning the presidential elections in 1994, President Kumaratunga expressed her willingness for cessation of hostilities and commenced negotiations with the LTTE. As they did in the past, the LTTE walked away from the negotiation table and commenced atrocities by exploding two Sri Lankan naval gunboats.¹⁵⁵

The counterinsurgency national plan of Kumaratunga’s government—war for peace—¹⁵⁶ was comprised of several offensive operations that were conducted with the aim of liberating the LTTE-dominated areas. “Operation Leap Forward” and “Operation Revirasa,” which were launched in 1995, managed to regain control south of Jaffna, including Jaffna town; however, it was estimated that nearly 2,500 had died, while another 7,000 were wounded on both sides. The next major offensives, “Operation Jaya Sikuru,” and “Operation Rana Gosa,” were launched in May 1997 and March 1999, respectively; both ended without much success.

While planning major attacks on military bases in the North, the LTTE had carried out devastating suicide bombing attacks in the South. An isolated military base in Mullativu fell into LTTE hands on July 18, 1996.¹⁵⁷ This battle alone caused the death of 1,200 military personnel and 332 LTTE fighters.¹⁵⁸ The Elephant Pass military base,

¹⁵⁴ Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins*, 99–101.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 104–114.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

which was established at the entrance to the Jaffna peninsula, fell to the LTTE in December 1999.¹⁵⁹ The LTTE bombed the Central Bank of Sri Lanka in January 1996 and in October 1997; another suicide attack by the LTTE destroyed the World Trade Centre building in Colombo metropolitan.¹⁶⁰ The sacred “Temple of Tooth” in Kandy was attacked in January 1998; in addition, the assassination attempt of President Kumaratunga in December 1999 and the attack on Bandaranayke International Airport in July 2001 were among the other major suicide attacks.¹⁶¹

President Kumaratunga’s government had failed in its “war for peace” strategy. The intense fighting caused heavy damage to both sides in terms of lives and military equipment. After losing a no-confidence motion, she dissolved the parliament. Winning the parliamentary elections of December 2001, Ranil Wickramasinghe of the UNP established a new government under SLFP President Kumaratunga. This had created a conflicting political environment on the island. At the same time, the Eelam War III ended with the unilateral cease-fire and declaration by the LTTE of their willingness to negotiate with the government for peace. Analyzing this uncommon stance of the LTTE, Hashim wrote,

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States had made the LTTE leadership more amenable to sitting down and talking with the government, because it had come to realize that the international community was now less tolerant of violence by non-state actors across the globe. The LTTE feared its already tarnished image might be further damaged if it did not show a willingness to engage in political compromise, particularly since there was now a government in Colombo that had expressed a distinct desire to negotiate an agreement.¹⁶²

The “no war, no peace” situation from 2002 to 2006 ended with failed negotiations, but made the LTTE stronger. With extensive financial support from the Tamil diaspora, the LTTE became so strong that “almost nobody, including officials in

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Hashim, *When Counter Insurgency Wins*, 104–114.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 114.

the government, thought it could be beaten.”¹⁶³ President Mahinda Rajapaksa, successor of President Kumaratunga, came to power in November 2005 and continued with peace negotiations. However, the increasing atrocities of the LTTE made Rajapaksa’s government re-commence counterinsurgency operations by mid-2006. During this Eelam War IV, luck was not with the LTTE. The political will of President Rajapaksa, the neutral stance of India—unlike in the past—and international support created a favorable environment for the Sri Lankan government to defeat the LTTE. After nearly three years of sheer struggle with counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, Sri Lanka defeated the LTTE militarily on May 19, 2009.

Apart from the military initiatives to defeat terrorism, political initiatives, too, had taken place extensively. Since 1983, all successive governments had engaged in peace negotiations to find solutions to the conflict. Negotiations for peace through external third party intervention, as well as domestic peace attempts were noticeable throughout the conflict. Under Jayewardene’s government, the Thimpu peace talks in July 1985, the Indo-Lanka peace accord of 1987, and the IPKF action from 1989 to 1990 had failed to achieve peace. Even after the recognition of Tamil as an official language, the LTTE did not give up the separatist movement. President Premadasa’s government engaged in peace talks during the period from 1989 to 1990 but failed to achieve lasting peace. Under President Kumaratunga’s government, once again several attempts for peace negotiation occurred. From October 1994 to March 2003, many rounds of peace talks were held in Jaffna, Sri Lanka; Thailand (three times); Norway; Germany; Japan; and Switzerland but “failed to contain or reduce violence and only extended the civil war.”¹⁶⁴ The Norwegian-backed ceasefire agreement from 2002 to 2006 had the same results as previously but strengthened the LTTE’s legitimacy.

The defeat of the LTTE could not have been possible if the “war on terror” had not been declared by the United States because changes in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency policies of many powerful nations and international organizations

¹⁶³ Ibid., 132.

¹⁶⁴ Justin O. Smith, “Maritime Interdiction in Counterinsurgency: The Role of the Sri Lankan Navy in the Defeat of the Tamil Tigers” (Master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2012), 39, http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/5346/10Jun_Smith_Justin.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

contributed to enforce many restrictions on terrorism and its related activities worldwide. Therefore, due to this changed global environment, after 2001, international terrorism and insurgency were in decline. Hence, the government of Sri Lanka was able to take advantage of the situation to strengthen its counterinsurgency mechanism while the LTTE was not in a position to sustain its capabilities.

H. CONCLUSION

Since the time of Sri Lanka's independence, many badly formed policies of successive governments have provoked the divisions of the society on ethnic lines. Some of the legislation that was passed offended the Tamil minority. To show their dissatisfaction with government policies, peaceful demonstrations organized by Tamils often ended up in ethnic riots. Some agreed-upon settlements to solve the problems of the minorities were repealed due to political outbidding of the majority Sinhalese. The lost opportunity to implement the Bandaranaike-Chevanayakam Pact in 1957 gradually paved the way for several militant groups to emerge as saviors in the Tamils' struggle for independence. Economic reforms and the "open economy" introduced to the country in the early 1980s further increased the ethnic problem due to the imbalance created in the domestic agrarian market system. This trade liberalization benefited the export sector but resulted in the decline in the price of domestic food crops.

The LTTE that emerged as the sole representative of the Tamils gained its strength to wage a protracted war against the government. Much needed funds to sustain the fight came through the Tamil diaspora. Backed by the Sea Tiger, Black Tiger, and Air Tiger wings, the suicide cadres of the LTTE were more effective in their missions. Failed peace attempts always led to increased violence. The LTTE used peace talks to regroup and for training its members, therefore, at the end of every peace attempt, the LTTE emerged more powerful than before.

The changing world order influenced the counterinsurgency in Sri Lanka. On its way to defeat insurgency and terrorism, successive governments experienced many challenges, such as domestic politics, military modernization, managing regional and global powers, and economic development. World powers and key international

institutions realized the real threat of terrorism after the 9/11 terrorist attack happened in the United States. The immediate shift in counterterrorism with the U.S.-led “war on terror” helped Sri Lanka to shape its counterinsurgency program. The lessons learned from the past, the improved capabilities of the Sri Lankan security forces and changed external approaches to counterterrorism finally facilitated the victory over the protracted counterterrorism campaign in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the most important contributory factor—the changing regional and global environment, especially the pre-2001 and post-2001 regional and international approaches to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency—are discussed in the subsequent chapter.

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III. IMPACT OF CHANGING EXTERNAL CONDITIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

Chapter III discusses the regional and international settings during the period from 1976 up to 2009. Analyzing the global and regional changes in this period help to evaluate the conditions that shaped the insurgency movement in Sri Lanka and counterinsurgency efforts by the government of Sri Lanka. When considering the world occurrences, this period can be divided into three different segments. First, the Cold War era up to 1991, second, the post-Cold War era from 1992 up to the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001, and third, the U.S.-led “war on terror” from 2002 up to 2009. The first hypothesis argues that the change in international opinion after September 11, 2001, affected foreign collaboration, which then had an impact on defeating terrorism and insurgency in Sri Lanka. Thus, the first potential conclusion is that if the war on terror had not been declared by the United States in 2001, it may not have been possible for the government of Sri Lanka to defeat Tamil terrorism and insurgency on the island in 2009. The civil war would have continued.

Similarly, the second hypothesis involves India, especially in terms of understanding the regional setting. This chapter points to three main eras in Indian politics. First, from 1976 up to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984, second, from 1985 up to the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, and third, from 1992 up to 2009. The related and second hypothesis explores the Sri Lankan government’s role in managing India during the period from 2006 to 2009. India’s influence on the Tamil separatist movement in the north and east of Sri Lanka had a direct impact on the Sri Lankan government’s policy decisions on counterinsurgency. Therefore, the second potential hypothesis suggests that India’s supportive stance, unlike in the past and despite Tamil Nadu pressure, facilitated the Sri Lankan government in the continuation of its successful counterinsurgency operations in 2009.

B. INTERNATIONAL SETTING: COLD WAR ERA UP TO 1991

The end of World War II created a bipolar world with political and security antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, the two super powers and a host of regional powers supported their favored allies. State-sponsored insurgency was used as a tool to contain or spread communism. As an example, the United States was supporting the Contras in Nicaragua, the Park regime in South Korea, and the Mujahedin in Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union supported the communists in Vietnam, Angola, Greece, and South Africa. As highlighted by Daniel Byman, “State support or sponsorship of an insurgency as an instrument of foreign policy was common during the Cold War.”¹⁶⁵ After World War II, the naval power of the United States increased, and its bases spread into the continents. “Sri Lanka, as a result of her strategic position, was a part of this evolving process and was tied to a global strategy.”¹⁶⁶ The U.S. aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk* visited Colombo harbor for a four-day visit in November 1985 to check the infrastructure available for larger ships. The United States also established a Voice of America broadcasting station north of Colombo that relayed programs from Washington.

Meanwhile, regional powers such as India also asserted their position. India had voiced her concerns over the establishment of this broadcasting station, claiming, “This [Voice of America] station can broadcast low-frequency messages to U.S. nuclear submarines in the northern Indian Ocean.”¹⁶⁷ In addition, the Indian government disclosed its protest when the president of Israel visited Sri Lanka on November 20, 1986. The Soviet Union, too, condemned the West’s involvement in Sri Lanka. When President Mikhail Gorbachev visited New Delhi in January 1987, he expressed his concerns, stating that “the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka is one of the examples to prove

¹⁶⁵ Daniel Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 1.

¹⁶⁶ Ramesh Somasunderan, “The Strategic Significance of the Island State of Sri Lanka” (Master’s thesis, Deakin University, 2003), 11.

¹⁶⁷ A. Jeyaratham Wilson, *The Break-Up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 205.

how the contemporary mechanism of imperialist intervention and diktata operates.”¹⁶⁸ Whilst India was supplying arms to Tamil insurgents, the Israeli and British advisors and a shipment of South African arms arrived in Sri Lanka. In addition, “The Israeli Interest section had been opened in the U.S. embassy in Sri Lanka.”¹⁶⁹

The spread of economic liberalization across the world during and after the 1970s promoted new forms of economic, political, and social activates in countries in the form of globalization. Changes in economic structures reduced international conflicts, but created and aggravated more internal wars. For instance, the liberal economic policies implemented by the government of Sri Lanka in 1977 intensified the Tamil separatist movement on the island and, at the same time, produced the left radicals such as the JanathaVimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Increased levels of globalization shaped a decisive shift in global security through migration as well. Fiona B. Adamson argued that “the increased mobility of people, capital and goods, and ideas and information creates incentives for political entrepreneurs to engage in transnational political mobilization and to build social and political movements that stretch across state boundaries.”¹⁷⁰ According to United Nations statistics, more than 232 million people live outside their native countries.¹⁷¹

The new trend of migrant communities allowed many of the Sri Lankan Tamils to settle in European countries, North America, and Australia, which created an active Tamil diaspora. According to Byman’s analysis, the insurgents in Sri Lanka received varied and important support from the Tamil diaspora, which “significantly increased insurgent’s capabilities and enabled them to withstand government counterinsurgency efforts.”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Wilson, *Break-Up of Sri Lanka*, 201.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 177–178.

¹⁷⁰ Fiona B. Adamson, “Globalization, Transnational Political Mobilization, and Networks of Violence,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 18, no. 1 (2010): 45, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09557570500059548>.

¹⁷¹ United Nations Population Fund, accessed October 14, 2015, <http://www.unfpa.org/migration>.

¹⁷² Daniel Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*, 41.

C. INTERNATIONAL SETTING: POST-COLD WAR ERA UP TO 2001

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union caused changes in political, economic, security, and international relations in the world. With the readjustment and opening of state borders, finance flowed to new regions, creating new opportunities for criminal and terrorist groups. National-liberation, religious-fundamentalist and criminal organizations established their international networks with the help of rapidly developing modern communication. According to former UN representative Gordon Weiss, “the flood of small arms opened by the availability of massive armories in ex-Soviet Bloc nations was chanelled by warlord businessmen to national liberation groups fighting ‘small wars.’”¹⁷³ In his report in the *Small Arms Survey*, Chris Smith summarizes that “the LTTE has proved itself extremely adept at trawling international networks to facilitate the movement of illegal SALW [small arms and light weapons].”¹⁷⁴ During this period, apart from the “traditional networks” in Cyprus, Hong Kong, Lebanon, and Singapore, the LTTE had obtained heavy machine guns, surface-to-air missiles, pressure mines, and explosives through the illegal arms markets in Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Slovakia, and Ukraine.¹⁷⁵

In the 1990s, the approval given to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to participate in the discussions and secessions in international organizations, including in the United Nations, paved the way for non-state actors to consolidate internationally. By taking advantage of this changed external condition, pro-LTTE activists in the NGO forums gave legitimacy to the LTTE in the international arena, thus creating avenues for them to launch strong NGO campaigns to gain support for their cause.¹⁷⁶ In December 1994, however, concerning the growing global security threats as the result of international terrorism, the United Nations passed resolution A/RES/49/60 that appealed

¹⁷³ Weiss, *Cage*, 87.

¹⁷⁴ Chris Smith, *In the Shadow of a Ceasefire: The Impacts of Small Arms Availability and Misuse in Sri Lanka* (Occasional Paper no. 11), (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, October 2003), <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/B-Occasional-papers/SAS-OP11-Sri-Lanka.pdf>.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Peace Brigades International, “War, NGOs, and Propaganda: Anti-NGO Sentiments in Sri Lanka,” December 1995, <http://www.peacebrigades.org/archive/lanka/slp9503.html>.

to countries to adopt policies appropriate for curbing terrorism.¹⁷⁷ As a result, apart from training the Sri Lankan military, “the United States designated the LTTE as a foreign terrorist organization [FTO] in 1997.”¹⁷⁸ In doing so, it became the second foreign country to proscribe the LTTE as an FTO after India, which had designated it as a terrorist organization in 1992.¹⁷⁹ This created a huge setback in the fundraising activities of the LTTE and, most importantly, it delegitimized the LTTE’s activities internationally. Four years after the U.S. designation of LTTE as an FTO, the United Kingdom proscribed the LTTE as an FTO in March 2001. However, the continuing tolerance of pro-LTTE movements by the majority of the countries in the world, until the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, continued to strengthen the LTTE both financially and militarily.

D. THE UNITED STATES-LED WAR ON TERROR AND THE LTTE

The 9/11 attack on the twin towers in New York City changed the international opinion on global terrorism. The internationally supported U.S.-led “war on terror” dealt a huge blow to transnational terrorist activities. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1368 (2001), passed the day after the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001, condemned the incident “as a threat to international peace and security.”¹⁸⁰ The Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001), adopted on September 28, 2001, included a number of responses given top priority that required states to undertake actions preventing and suppressing the financing of terrorist acts.¹⁸¹ Simultaneously, other international organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) expressed their willingness to contribute to the fight against terrorism through enhanced cooperation with other

¹⁷⁷ General Assembly, *Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism* (Resolution A/RES/49/60) (New York: United Nations, December 9, 1994), <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/49/a49ro60.htm>.

¹⁷⁸ K.A Kornstadt, *Sri Lanka: Background and U.S. Relations* (CRS Report No. RL31707) Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service. 2008), ([ADA486249](#)).

¹⁷⁹ Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, xxix; See also, Mark Kaufman, “U.S. Quietly Expands its Role in Sri Lanka. Green Berets Help Train Soldiers, Open Paths for Military Presence,” *The Dallas Morning News*, June 30, 1996, <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/52/007.html>.

¹⁸⁰ Woolsey, *Combatting Terrorism*, 375

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

similar organizations and states. While the international community and international organizations including the United Nations took actions against terrorism, the Sri Lankan government exploited this changing situation to strengthen its counterinsurgency mechanism.

Increased bilateral relations with the United States opened avenues for the Sri Lankan security forces to strengthen U.S.–Sri Lankan military relations. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Wickremesinge met President Bush at the White House in July 2002 and requested “U.S. support for peace and economic development in Sri Lanka. It was the first visit to Washington by a Sri Lankan leader since 1984.”¹⁸² In order to observe the training requirements of the security forces, a defense assessment team from the United States visited Sri Lanka in September 2002. “The United States and Sri Lanka held their ninth consecutive joint military exercise from January-March 2003.”¹⁸³ In addition, a training agreement was signed between the two countries. To enhance naval relations, the USS *Blue Ridge* arrived in Colombo in February 2005. In order to increase the navy’s capabilities, the United States Coast Guard offshore patrol vessel USCG *Courageous* was donated to the Sri Lanka Navy.¹⁸⁴ Sri Lanka benefited from this assistance because of a shift in the U.S. policy on terrorism.

The increased enthusiasm among the international community to support the global war on terrorism led by the United States reduced the number of countries helping non-state actors engaged in international terrorism. The international restrictions imposed on the LTTE as a part of the “war on terror” impacted its survival. Of the many restrictions enforced, the following were significant:

- In 2001, the United Kingdom and Australia proscribed the LTTE as an FTO.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Kornstadt, *Sri Lanka: Background and U.S. Relations*, CRS-15.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Battle, “Lessons in Legitimacy,” 38.

- The Patriot Act of 2001 and the Anti-Terrorist Financing Act “has resulted in the withholding of roughly \$4 billion from the LTTE and made it more difficult for the group to acquire weapons.”¹⁸⁶
- In October 2001, the Canadian police in Toronto intercepted and arrested forty LTTE gang members involved in fund collection activities.¹⁸⁷
- In 2003, for the first time, Thailand apprehended three LTTE members trying to acquire weapons in Thailand.¹⁸⁸
- In 2005, the UK Charity Commission delisted the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO)—one of the LTTE front organizations— as a charitable organization.¹⁸⁹
- In 2006, proscription of the LTTE in Canada immobilized the activities of the World Tamil Movement in Montreal.¹⁹⁰
- In August 2006, the United States arrested four LTTE members “engaged in negotiation with an undercover FBI agent to purchase and export ten SA-18 heat-seeking anti-aircraft missiles and launchers, 500 AK-47s, and other military equipment for the LTTE.”¹⁹¹
- In 2006, the European Union proscribed the LTTE as an FTO.¹⁹²
- In 2007, U.S. and French authorities banned the Tamil Television Network from using its systems.¹⁹³
- In April 2007, France apprehended the leader and the thirteen others in the LTTE’s office in Paris.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁶ Kornstadt, *Sri Lanka: Background and U.S. Relations*, CRS-15–CRS-16.

¹⁸⁷ Battle, “Lessons in Legitimacy,” 38.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ U.S. Attorney’s Office, “Four Defendants Plead Guilty to All Charges, Including Conspiring to Acquire Anti-Aircraft Missiles and Provide Material Support to the LTTE, a Foreign Terrorist Organization,” U.S. Attorney’s Office press release, January, 27, 2009, <https://www.fbi.gov/newyork/press-releases/2009/nyfo012709b.htm>.

¹⁹² Battle, “Lessons in Legitimacy,” 39.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

- In April 2007, the FBI arrested the leader of the LTTE office in the United States.¹⁹⁵
- In May 2007, Australia arrested two LTTE members involved in fund collections and seized \$520,000.¹⁹⁶
- In June 2007, the authorities arrested the president of the British Tamil Association and “a British court later froze all of his assets, worth four billion pounds sterling.”¹⁹⁷

The outlawing of the LTTE in the international arena reached its apex after 2006, in which Mahinda Rajapaksa’s government in Sri Lanka was able to intensify its operations against the LTTE. With intelligence-sharing among the international community, the Sri Lanka Navy destroyed eight LTTE warehouse ships between September 2006 and October 2007. Those large vessels carried over ten thousand tons of military arsenals, which included artillery and motor rounds, three aircrafts in dismantled form, torpedoes and missiles, and other military equipment.¹⁹⁸

Increased military assistance expedited the counterterrorism campaign in Sri Lanka. Apart from support from the United States and other European countries, Sri Lanka received other military assistance from Asian and eastern European countries, including China, Israel, and Russia. In 2007, China agreed to provide \$37.6 million worth of military equipment to Sri Lanka.¹⁹⁹ Israel provided unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and fast attack crafts. Similarly, Russia supplied transport helicopters. Sri Lanka acquired MiG 27 fighters from Ukraine and rocket launchers from Pakistan. India and the United States supplied military radars and maritime surveillance systems. “In addition to material support, India, Pakistan, and the United States provided the advanced military training and shared critical intelligence with Sri Lanka.”²⁰⁰ The dramatic change in the external setting after September 11, 2001, was the turning point in Sri Lanka’s efforts in

¹⁹⁵ Battle, “Lessons in Legitimacy,” 40.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Smith, “Maritime Interdiction in Counterinsurgency,” 48–50; see also Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis*, 24–25.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 66.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 66–67.

fighting insurgency and terrorism on the island. Both direct and indirect actions of the states around the world in restraining the transnational illegal and criminal activities of the LTTE created the conditions for its decline after 2001.

E. REGIONAL SETTING: FROM 1976 TO 1984

Backed by the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971, and after its first nuclear test in 1974, India in 1976 attempted to emerge as the hegemonic power in South Asia and became concerned about the developing American interest in Sri Lanka.²⁰¹ The pro-western foreign policy of J. R. Jayewardene's UNP government in 1977 hindered Indo-Lanka relations and, in turn, this created conditions for India to utilize the insurgency to interfere in the domestic politics of Sri Lanka. The rivalry between the two state leaders did not end until the tragic death of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984. As Jayaratnam Wilson explains,

In 1979 President Jayewardene sent a special peace mission to Mrs. Gandhi which was instructed to tell her that the Jayawardane family had been friends of the Nehrus for the previous forty years and that he would like to maintain these links. The effort made no impression.²⁰²

In 1981, President Jayewardene expressed his concerns on the Indian stance regarding Sri Lanka, stating, "You [India] can conquer us but you cannot conquer our spirit."²⁰³ In countering that statement, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi expressed her views, stating that she would have ordered the Indian Army to invade Ceylon.²⁰⁴

Mistrust between the two leaders badly affected the Sri Lankan actions suppressing the insurgency that emerged in the 1970s. Minister Indira Gandhi's supportive stance for the Tamil movement in Sri Lanka dramatically altered the dynamics of the separatist movement.²⁰⁵ India began training Tamil militants. Expressing the views of one Tamil militant on this military training, Narayan Swamy writes, "One middle-

²⁰¹ Wilson, *Break-up of Sri Lanka*, 205.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind*, 94.

ranking guerilla said: ‘Until 1983 I found it difficult to attract people into the Tamil movement. Once India entered the picture, there was a rush for joining our struggle that I found it difficult to control the crowds.’”²⁰⁶

India’s decision to back the Tamil insurgency was influenced by domestic politics in Tamil Nadu. The South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, predominantly Tamil, shared historical links with the Tamils in northern Sri Lanka. After the Black July riots in 1983, the influx of the Sri Lankan-displaced Tamils in Tamil Nadu promoted the Sri Lanka Tamil cause and brought about massive political support. Some politicians in the Tamil Nadu government who supported the separatist movement in Sri Lanka were influential in Indian central government actions on Sri Lanka, too. Indira Gandhi also was insecure about losing support in Tamil Nadu after the insurgency, which weakened her hold in the country.

F. REGIONAL SETTING: FROM 1985 TO 1991

Unlike his mother, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi adopted a positive stance regarding the Sri Lankan issue. However, his efforts to solve the problem ended without much success. Rajiv Gandhi took office as the youngest prime minister of India subsequent to his mother’s death on October 31, 1984. The assassination of Indira Gandhi “was a severe blow to the Tamil resistance leaders, who had to start all over again with her son Rajiv.”²⁰⁷ Rajiv Gandhi held office until his defeat in 1989. In 1985, he facilitated the Thimpu peace talks between the Sri Lankan government and the leaders of the Tamil political parties.²⁰⁸ In order to shift the debate on the Tamil problem to a constructive dialogue, in July 1985, Rajiv Gandhi expressed his views, saying, “The Ceylon Tamils should not expect a separate state or a federal state but something similar to what India has.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind*, 94.

²⁰⁷ Wilson, *Break-up of Sri Lanka*, 204.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 183.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*,

Some countries, but not others, supported Rajiv Gandhi's stance on the Sri Lankan problem. "The United States and Britain have both recognized India as the mediating power in the Ceylon imbroglio."²¹⁰ Contrary to the U.S. and the U.K. stances, the People's Republic of China openly supported the government of Sri Lanka, stating that China was "totally opposed to the division of Sri Lanka." In April 1985, after President Jayewardene visited Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq's government agreed to provide military training for the Sri Lankans. India also protested the Israel president's visit to Sri Lanka in November 1986, stating, "Ceylon cannot expect India to be a mediator in the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict while at the same time it acts in a way that is hostile to Indian interest."²¹¹

The changing stance of Rajiv Gandhi's government from positive to an antagonistic posture was obvious by 1987. Indian fighter jets and transport planes entered Sri Lankan airspace—violating international rules and helping the Tamil militants by dropping some 25 tons of relief materials, including food items. Sri Lanka could do nothing because "India warned of serious consequences if the planes were shot. A shocked Sri Lanka had no choice but to comply."²¹² India's involvement in the Sri Lankan case reached its apex with the arrival of the IPKF in Sri Lanka in July 1987. However, Rajiv Gandhi paid the consequences for his action later. An LTTE suicide bomber assassinated him on May 21, 1991 at Siperumbudur in Chennai India.

G. REGIONAL SETTING: FROM 1992 TO 2009

India's strategy of protecting the LTTE from military annihilation became neutral after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi on Indian soil by a Tamil suicide bomber in 1991. Before his assassination, Rajiv Gandhi was defeated in the 1989 election where V. P. Singh became the prime minister. It was during his campaign for the 1991 elections that he was assassinated. The new Indian government decided to withdraw the IPKF in December 1989 and "the last of Indian soldiers sailed out of Trincomalee on March 24,

²¹⁰ Wilson, *Break-up of Sri Lanka*, 200.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

²¹² Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind*, 154.

1990.”²¹³ The vacuum created by the withdrawal of the IPKF paved the way for the LTTE to take the control of over one-third of Sri Lanka’s land area “and almost two-thirds of Sri Lanka’s coastline.”²¹⁴ Narayan Swamy summarized India’s withdrawal from Sri Lanka by stating, “Asia had seen nothing like this since the Viet Cong humbled the mighty U.S. over a decade ago in similar circumstances.”²¹⁵ In 1992, a year after Rajiv Gandhi’s death, India outlawed the LTTE as a terrorist organization, becoming the first country to proscribe the LTTE as terrorists. From then until its military defeat in 2009—despite the pressure from the state of Tamil Nadu and outside LTTE sympathizers requesting a lift of the ban—successive Indian governments extended the LTTE ban. The Indian decision to proscribe the LTTE as a terrorist organization created conditions in the international diplomatic corps where the recognition of the legitimacy of the LTTE became a problem.²¹⁶

The existence of LTTE operatives on Indian soil became difficult after 1992. From 1992 to 2009, successive governments of India “played a significant behind-the-scenes role in Sri Lanka. Indian and Sri Lankan leaders often exchanged views on the telephone while the war against the LTTE raged.”²¹⁷ Indian authorities adopted a series of severe measures against the LTTE, who had once enjoyed protection in India. “Despite the protests from a section of politicians in Tamil Nadu, New Delhi has continued to assist Colombo militarily.”²¹⁸ India’s domestic setting had also changed drastically as coalition governments at the center intervened in the Tamil politicians’ influence. In November 1991, the Indian Navy seized the LTTE ship MV *Ongova*, which was smuggling arms and ammunition.²¹⁹ In January 1993, the Indian Navy detected the LTTE ship MV *Yahath* smuggling arms and ammunitions in the Bay of Bengal; however, it was

²¹³ Ibid.,

²¹⁴ Swamy, *Inside an Elusive Mind*, 211.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 250.

²¹⁷ Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, 40.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 36.

²¹⁹ Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis*, 24.

scuttled by the LTTE to avoid capture.²²⁰ In May 1998, the Indian Navy destroyed the LTTE ship MV *Mariamman* off Andaman Island, which was transporting armaments.²²¹ In January 2006, the Sri Lanka Navy apprehended 60,000 detonators smuggled from Tamil Nadu. At the same time, Indian authorities seized tons of explosives, arms, and ammunition off the coast of Tamil Nadu. By this time, it was clear that “the Tigers’ dependence on Tamil Nadu was threatened: meanwhile, paralleled growing difficulties with the Western countries, many of which had outlawed LTTE as a terrorist outfit,”²²² weakened the LTTE further. Evaluating India’s role after 1992, Swamy summarizes,

Despite its bitter experience, India never lost its focus vis-à-vis Sri Lanka. After hands-off approach for many years following Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, New Delhi resumed its active interest in the affairs of the country. While adamantly refusing to support any break up of Sri Lanka, India made it clear that it will remain an interested party in the affairs of the Tamil minority.”²²³

While it switched its stance on the LTTE, it remained committed to interfering in Sri Lankan politics.

H. CONCLUSION

The success over the LTTE could not have been possible if the United States of America had not declared the “global war on terror” on one hand, and on the other hand, if India’s supportive stance, despite Tamil Nadu pressure, had not facilitated the Sri Lankan government to continue its successful counterinsurgency operations in 2009. Many powerful countries and international organizations changed their perspectives on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency policies after 2001. This contributed to the enforcing of many restrictions on terrorism and its related activities worldwide. Therefore, due to this changing environment after December 2001, international terrorism and insurgency were on the decline. However, the international setting was different during the Cold War era. The ideological power struggles between superpowers

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ministry of Defense, *Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis*, 24.

²²² Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, 87.

²²³ Ibid., 35.

eventually divided the world into two power blocks, although some states remained nonaligned. Sri Lanka's neutral stance in world affairs during the 1960s helped manage regional and international issues diplomatically, but it struggled in formulating solutions for the emerging domestic ethnic issue. The situation in Sri Lanka began to change when a new UNP government came into power in 1977. The cordial relationship it had enjoyed with its powerful neighbor, India, changed with the open economic policies of the new government, which also aggravated the internal conflict in Sri Lanka.

To face the emerging trends of globalization in the 1980s, the Sri Lankan government made some liberal economic policy decisions that attracted the western world. These pro-West foreign policies of President Jayewardene's UNP government created conditions for then pro-Soviet India to interfere with the domestic affairs in Sri Lanka. By the 1970s, backed by the Soviet Union, India emerged as the main power in South Asia. The antagonistic approach of President Jayewardene provoked India and made Indira Gandhi's government covertly support the Tamil militants, which later developed as a protracted armed struggle against the government of Sri Lanka.

The end of the Cold War in early 1990 opened a new world order in which transnational criminal activities and terrorism spread rapidly and freely across open borders. Due to the liberal migration policies of many countries during this era, the diaspora activities supporting terrorism in the forms of fundraising and propaganda reached its apex in Europe, North America, and the United States. Terrorist organizations around the world, including the LTTE, benefitted from the easily accessible weapon markets in ex-Soviet Bloc. The undue recognition of NGOs in the international affairs facilitated non-state actors to promote their causes internationally, even at discussions in the United Nations. The pro-LTTE activists exploited this situation and dominated the NGO forum to gain some legitimacy for the LTTE internationally.

After identifying the mounting threats to world peace, the United Nations took preventive actions on terrorism. Resolutions passed in the general assembly urged member states to implement actions against terrorism. In 1992, India proscribed the LTTE as a terrorist organization. Since then, the LTTE depended purely on the funds generated in other European countries, including North America and Australia, through

their diaspora. The United States proscribed the LTTE as an FTO in 1997. This was a big blow to the fundraising and money laundering of the LTTE overseas. The proscription of the LTTE both in India and in the United States created some difficulties for the organization initially, but there was tolerance of LTTE activities in other countries despite the United Nations' efforts to crush terrorism, that created safe havens for sympathizers who support the LTTE both financially and militarily. Due to that support, terrorism continued in Sri Lanka.

The aftermath of the tragic 9/11 terrorist attack created a significant ideological shift among the international community, where almost all countries, including international organizations, started to support the U.S.-led "war on terror." The Sri Lankan government benefitted from these changed external conditions in their counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts. Because of increased bilateral relations with the United States, after 18 years, Sri Lanka was able to gain the most wanted defense assistance to fight against the LTTE. The proscription of the LTTE internationally curtailed all of its activities—especially fundraising and arms smuggling.

The pro-LTTE stance of India continued during the first few years of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's rule. However, at the latter stage, his policies changed. The consequence of the Indo-Lanka peace treaty and the induction of the IPKF finally resulted in the killing of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by the LTTE. However, by then, India's position had shifted regarding the internal conflict in Sri Lanka. The successive Indian governments after 1991, despite Tamil Nadu pressure, adopted a neutral position—sometimes supportive on counterterrorism in Sri Lanka—but paid more attention to the rights of the Tamil minority on the island.

When considering global affairs from 1976 to 2009, the changing international environment influenced international terrorism, which in turn had an impact on the internal conflict in Sri Lanka as well. The Sri Lankan government was able to win its thirty years of war against the LTTE mainly due to the changed external conditions on counterterrorism, especially after two incidents: first, al-Qaeda's 9/11 attack in 2001, and second, Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in 1991. Therefore, the Sri Lankan case presents a good study by which the impact of changing external conditions on counterinsurgency

can be evaluated. While counterinsurgency efforts are important, external conditions in our globalized world are increasingly important to study domestic insurgency.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The Sri Lankans suffered from the violence of insurgency and terrorism for over thirty years. From 1980 to 2006, the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism strategies of successive governments did not achieve the expected results. Due to the erroneous domestic policies and as a result of the changing external conditions, the Tamil insurgency on the island evolved as a hybrid terrorist organization. Despite an enormous economic destruction, this protracted conflict caused nearly 90,000 deaths, including the assassinations of two heads of states both in India and in Sri Lanka.

To create a separate state for Tamils, the LTTE was engaged in an armed struggle, within which they developed as one of the most ruthless terrorist organizations in the world. The LTTE, which started with few members in 1976, had evolved as a full-fledged terrorist organization with nearly 25,000 cadres by 2006.²²⁴ The organization encompassed all the components needed to become a conventional force—land, sea, and air capabilities. Along with the use of suicide terrorism, the land, sea, and air wings of the LTTE created a very lethal force. What allowed the LTTE to evolve as such a dangerous force? Without external assistance, it was impossible for terrorists to survive on a tiny island nation like Sri Lanka. Therefore, the state-sponsored terrorism, diaspora support, liberal social policies of western countries and the behaviors of non-state actors, particularly prior to December 2001, created favorable conditions for the LTTE to become almost a conventional force to wage a protracted war for 30 years.

In this thesis, I examined the question of why Sri Lanka's counterterrorism strategy succeeded in 2009 when it had previously failed. I argue here that counterinsurgency and counterterrorism activities are shaped by external conditions. The two situations discussed in the thesis—the changed in external conditions after the 9/11 terrorist attack in 2001 and India's stance over the Sri Lankan issue—emphasized the fact that external conditions influenced counterinsurgency and counterterrorism in Sri Lanka.

²²⁴ Jayathilaka et al., "Defeating Terrorism: The Sri Lankan Experience," 35.

The changes in the international setting that related to counterinsurgency and counterterrorism in Sri Lanka from 1976 to 2009 are noticeable during four significant eras. The first is the Cold War era up to 1991. During this period, western involvement in the Sri Lankan affairs and the ignorance of the Sri Lankan government about her closest and most influential neighbor—India—as a seemingly friendly nation, finally caused problems. India started to support the Tamil insurgency movement on the island by providing arms, training, and safe havens for insurgents.

Second, economic liberalization unfurled with the emergence of the globalization process in the late 1970s, which promoted new forms of economic activities in Sri Lanka. While the liberal economic policies attracted foreign investment, they also exaggerated insurgency and terrorism on the island by creating new disparities and, at the same time, new sources for expression. During this period, a new trend in international migration permitted many Tamils to settle in western countries, especially Europe, creating a strong diaspora community that later became one of the strongest supports for the LTTE. This external support eventually strengthened the fighting capabilities of the organization as well as created a powerful LTTE propaganda mechanism overseas.

Third, the aftermath of the Cold War is important because this period, mainly up to 2002, is marked with many changes in the international system, which had an impact on international terrorism. Transnational criminal activities by warlords and non-state actors, especially in the fields of gunrunning and money laundering, have increased. By using its front organizations, the LTTE exploited this changed external situation to further strengthen their organization both financially and militarily. The involvement of NGOs in global forums also increased significantly during this period. The LTTE and their sympathizers took advantage of NGOs to gain much-required legitimacy for their organization internationally. However, due to the growing threat of terrorism, the international community, including the United Nations, initiated actions against terrorism. The near outcome of this action was the proscription of the LTTE as an FTO in the United States in 1997. Though this was a setback in the international activities of the organization, the liberal social policies of many European states prior to the 9/11 terrorist

attack in 2001 allowed pro-LTTE movements to freely engage in their propaganda and fundraising activities.

The fourth era is the post 9/11 period. The shift in international opinion after September 11, 2001, to fight the global war on terrorism had an impact on the defeat of the terrorists and insurgency in Sri Lanka. The United Nations and other international organizations imposed stern policy decisions in support of the U.S.-led “war on terror.” As stated earlier, this changing situation benefited the Sri Lankan government’s fight against terrorism, and the government exploited this situation to strengthen its counterinsurgency and counterterrorism mechanism. Increased cooperation with the United States helped Sri Lanka to develop the capabilities of its security forces. Material support and intelligence-sharing increased the confidence of the troops fighting against the LTTE. Most importantly, the involvement of the United States in fighting international terrorism reduced the number of countries supporting non-state actors engaged in international terrorism. The proscription of the LTTE and its related activities worldwide was a huge blow to the organization in terms of fundraising, propaganda, arms procurement, and arms smuggling. The proscription of the LTTE and its front organizations reached its apex by 2006, when the majority of the European countries, including the European Union, banned the LTTE. Not only that, Asian and European countries, including China, Israel, Pakistan, and Russia, provided much-needed military assistance for the Sri Lankan government to fight against the LTTE. When considering their previous activities, due to the worldwide restrictions on terrorism, the fighting capabilities of the LTTE were in decline after 2002.

At the regional level, the Indo-Lanka relationship became a decisive factor in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism in Sri Lanka. During the Cold War, the Soviet backing for India was obvious. In the early 1980s, the West-biased Sri Lankan policies created a problem for East-biased India to maintain cordial relations with her neighbor—Sri Lanka. India misunderstood the new open economic policies of President Jayewardene and was suspicious about the western involvement in the island. The decision by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1982 to support Tamil militants in Sri Lanka prevented apprehension of the LTTE leader. On the other hand, it created greater

enthusiasm among the Tamil youths joining the insurgency to follow military training in India. If India extradited the leader of the LTTE organization—Prabhakaran—to Sri Lanka in 1982, the situation would have been different today. The civil war would not have occurred. The 90,000 human lives lost, including those of two world leaders, would have been saved.

The tragic death of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 was a setback for the LTTE. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who came to power after his mother's death, continued her policy of supporting the insurgents, but attempted to solve the Sri Lankan problem. However, the domestic politics in Tamil Nadu influenced the Indian central government actions on Sri Lanka. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi intervened in the Sri Lankan government's actions fighting the insurgency. As a result, the IPKF arrived in Sri Lanka in July 1987 and remained in the island until March 1990.

The existence of the LTTE on Indian soil became difficult after the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. India proscribed the LTTE as a terrorist organization in 1992, becoming the world's first country to do so. Since then, successive Indian governments continued this policy. Indian proscription curtailed the mobility of the LTTE in the Bay of Bengal. The Indian Navy either apprehended or destroyed a number of LTTE cargo vessels smuggling arms and ammunitions to Sri Lanka. Since 1980, the changing regional conditions fueled the Sri Lankan insurgency and terrorism initially, but later, since 1992, the Indian position changed. India did not interfere with the Sri Lankan action defeating the LTTE.

B. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

In this thesis, I endeavored to determine why the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism theories did not work in a certain timeframe and worked later in the context of countering insurgency and terrorism in Sri Lanka. The findings proved that the changing external condition, both international and regional, had an impact on the Sri Lankan case. As Narayan Swamy concludes,

Sri Lanka's decisive victory over the LTTE is the biggest success story in the world of anti-terrorism. It is in sharp contrast to the dragging military

campaign the U.S. leads against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It also outshines the collapse of the Maoist Shining Path movement in Peru. And it came about despite emerging evidence that a section of the West tried to save at least some LTTE leaders before the war ended on 18 May.²²⁵

When considering how the external environment changed during the life span of the LTTE, from 1976 to 2009, it was obvious that the behavior of state-sponsored terrorism and liberal social policies of the international community which led to diaspora support, affected counterterrorism and counterinsurgency in Sri Lanka.

1. Behavior of External State-Sponsored Terrorism

Tamil insurgents benefitted from external state-sponsored terrorism. The state sponsorship of terrorism was obvious within the initial stage of the Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka. The world order from 1976 to 1991 created conditions for this to happen. The failure of the Sri Lankan government to unfold the international and the regional setting correctly affected its counterinsurgency efforts. Outside support gave much-needed strength to the LTTE. Daniel Byman et al. also highlighted the fact that “both state and non-state support for an insurgency can make a movement far more effective, prolong the war, increase the scale and lethality of its struggle.”²²⁶ Therefore, at the later stage, even without support from India, the LTTE continued its atrocities and even became a very lethal force. Neighbor in close proximity always have an impact on each other’s political affairs. Hence, to achieve their political goals, a country may tend to utilize the insurgency or terrorist movement in another country. Therefore, cooperation among neighboring states, even if hard to maintain, is essential for countries involved in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts.

2. Behavior of Diaspora Support

Tamil diaspora became one of the main assets for the LTTE. The Sri Lankan Tamils who migrated and settled mostly in the European countries became the main source of income for the LTTE. The Tamil diaspora engaged in fundraising and

²²⁵ Swamy, *Tiger Vanquished*, 177.

²²⁶ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*, 3.

propaganda activities and faced no interruptions by their host governments. From the 1980s up to 2002, the international setup was helpful in raising funds to support the LTTE. At one point, the organization had collected 80 percent of its annual operating budget through the Tamil diaspora. Writing about the LTTE's fund raising activities, Daniel Byman et al. pointed out that "The LTTE network straddles the globe and effectively integrates the Tamil diaspora into one overarching external system that constitutes the lifeline for LTTE guerrillas on the ground."²²⁷ Due to this enormous income, the LTTE was in a better position to fight government forces. On the other hand, the Sri Lankan diplomatic efforts to curtail those diaspora activities did not succeed because

Major friendly powers, such as the United States and Britain, declined to become more committed to a situation that could only result in a worsening of their already strained relations with India. Neither had they or other nations shown any willingness to move against the expatriate funding that has become the major source of insurgent finance. The result was that Sri Lanka had to proceed alone.²²⁸

This unique situation illustrates how the prevailing external conditions affected the counterinsurgency in Sri Lanka. The negative world opinion of Sri Lanka prior to December 11, 2001, turned completely positive with the change of external conditions after the 9/11 terrorist attack. Actions after this event by the international community to curtail the Tamil diaspora activities created conditions for the Sri Lankan government to effectively engage in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. If the "war on terror" had not been declared by the United States in 2001, it might not have been possible for Sri Lanka to defeat terrorism and insurgency on the island in 2009. Therefore, the international community's willingness to cooperate with countries' fights against terrorism and insurgency in the way of continuous monitoring of diaspora activities will create conditions to eradicate terrorism and insurgency from those countries.

A state could not defeat insurgency and terrorism in isolation. After reviewing the counterinsurgency campaigns worldwide, Bruce Hoffman and Jennifer Taw came up

²²⁷ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*, 43.

²²⁸ Art, *Democracy and Counterterrorism*, 503.

with four fundamentals that any government should include in their counterinsurgency or counterterrorism national plan irrespective of geographic regions, times, and political systems. They highlighted “foreign collaboration amongst governments and security forces” as the fourth principle.²²⁹ This thesis finds that changing external conditions have both negative and positive effects on “foreign collaboration,” thereby leading to successes as well as failures in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. Therefore, cooperation among states will vary once the external conditions change. These changing external situations create an impact on the countries engaged in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Therefore, as summarized by Audrey Kurth Cronin,

Terrorism is an unprecedented, powerful non-state threat to the international system that no single state, regardless of how powerful it may be in traditional terms, can defeat alone, especially in the absence of long-term, serious scholarship engaged in by its most creative minds.²³⁰

The Sri Lankan case is a classic example of this dynamic. Hence, further studies on this aspect of the impact of changing external conditions on counterinsurgency will help to develop new counterinsurgency and counterterrorism concepts in the future.

²²⁹ Hoffman, *Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Insurgency*, 3.

²³⁰ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism,” *International Security* 27, no. 3 (Winter 2002/03): 58.

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